



Russians Cheer the Czar's Reforms, October 1905

THE CRISIS OF LIBERALISM AND THE MAKING OF MASS SOCIETY, 1880–1914



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Conclusion

SARAH BERNHARDT: FIN DE SIÈCLE SUPERSTAR Actress Sarah Bernhardt should probably be considered Europe's first media superstar—and sex goddess.¹ But her notoriety cannot be understood apart from the diverse and volatile cultural world she inhabited. The illegitimate daughter of a Jewish courtesan, Bernhardt became famous in the 1860s for her entrancing performances in such high-tone dramas as *Iphigenia* by the seventeenth-century playwright Jean Racine. Over the next five decades, Bernhardt's appearance in ever more sexualized and melodramatic roles gave her additional notoriety and allure. Audiences turned out especially to see her death scenes—which she performed nightly with tremendous charisma.

Bernhardt's death scenes may have been powerful, but the French actress was very much alive to the opportunities her age offered. In the 1880s, she allowed Thomas Alva Edison to record her "golden voice" on his recently invented phonograph, and by the 1910s, a woman who had starred in classical tragedies was performing in silent films and in vaudeville shows, alongside juggling acts, minstrels in blackface, and talking cockatoos. Perhaps



Sarah Bernhardt as Cleopatra In one of her most famous stage roles, the French superstar actress Sarah Bernhardt played Cleopatra, the Egyptian queen. Playwright Victorien Sardou's version of the story offered "the divine Sarah" plenty of opportunity for sexualized acting and melodramatic dying.

the most novel aspect of her performances was the breadth of her appeal. On the stage at the Comédie-Française and in her wildly successful whistle-stop tours of Europe and the United States, the actress popularly known as "the divine Sarah" enthralled millions of fans.

Sarah Bernhardt was hardly typical of her age. In fact, she lived at the extreme end of what was tolerable to most "respectable" Europeans. Unwilling to be bossed around by others, she bought a theater and set up her own artistic studio. Her widely publicized personal life was anything but the Victorian ideal. She had affairs, one rather openly with a woman, and bore an illegitimate son. Her sexuality and ethnic and religious identities, in fact, were highly complicated. In some of her most acclaimed roles, she cross-dressed, playing Hamlet or Napoleon's son the "eagle." Often cast as an oriental seductress, she was also acclaimed for her portrayal of the great French heroine, Joan of Arc. She was a practicing Catholic, but caricatures always highlighted her Jewish ancestry. Her success, which brought her riches as well as worldwide renown, did not erase her public's prejudice against Jews or against women who ran their own affairs.



Hyper-nationalism c. 1871–1914

Mass European emigration 1871–1914

Second Industrial Revolution 1860s–



1860

1865

1870

1875

1880

1885

Sarah Bernhardt's life and fame illustrate that in the late nineteenth century we enter a new age, one in which a decidedly un-Victorian actress could gain global popularity,



even as hyper-nationalist and racist movements arose in reaction to the cosmopolitan and diverse lifestyles "the divine Sarah" represented.

The century's end would see the appearance of many new forms: new forms of industrial capitalism, new mass movements in politics, and new forms of cultural experimentation. It was a period of contradictions in which new, more racially charged forms of nationalism and imperialism appeared at the same time Europeans were experiencing unprecedented social and physical mobility. This era would see the formation of mass political movements such as socialism and the emergence of "life reform" programs such as vegetarianism. Europeans were richer, relatively speaking, than ever before—but that relative wealth made the plight of those left in poverty seem more desperate and unjust. The mixture of these contradictory forces and the new scale and speed on which life was lived made Europe before World War I a dangerous, daring, and innovative place—a place where a dangerous, daring, and innovative woman like Sarah Bernhardt could take the public by storm.

What were the major features of modern mass society in Europe?

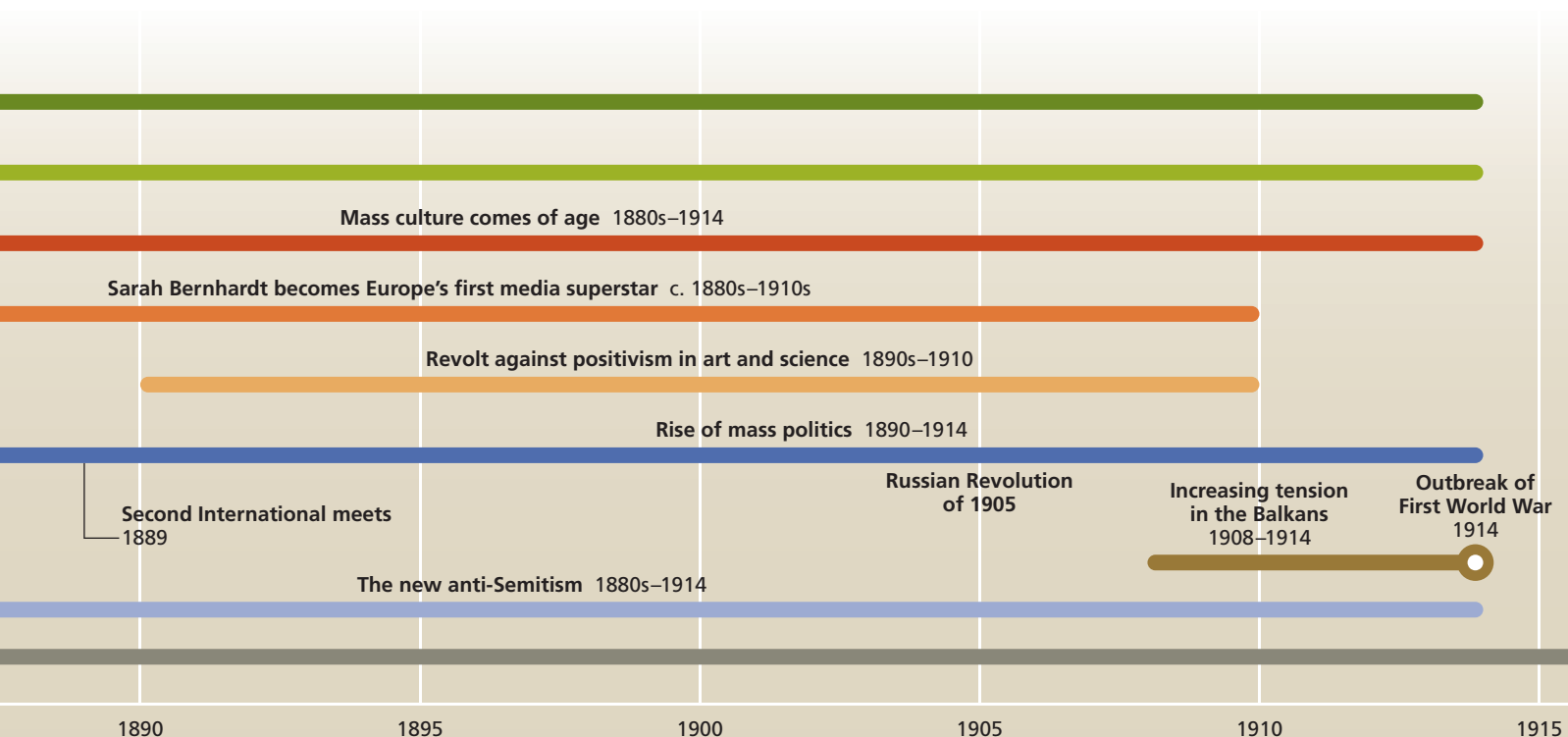
just after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871, the very years in which Sarah Bernhardt earned her fame, may be considered as marking the opening of a new, fully modern, era in European

cultural, political, and economic life. Those who lived through this era also called it the *fin de siècle* or, literally, the century's end. This term caught on for Europeans precisely because, by 1900, most urban and even rural people felt that a slower, more stable, and more predictable era was ending, and another, faster-moving one was beginning. Artists and writers would call it the modern era and insist that it represented a real and permanent break with the traditions and ideas of the past.

Modernity meant different things to different people. For some, modernity meant hope—for more social mobility, for better working and living conditions, for new forms of entertainment and governance more responsive to the needs and desires of *all* citizens. For others, modernity seemed threatening. It meant industrial strikes, vicious competition between businesses, rising tensions within old empires, the destruction of older ways of life, and the composition of music and art that sought not to please, but to act as, in the words of the Russian Futurist poets, "a

Living the Modern

It is not possible, of course, to single out one particular date and say of it, on that day, Europeans awoke to discover they had suddenly become modern. But the period



slap in the face of public taste.” It was a contentious era, in part because more people now were able to express their dreams, fears, and visions of the good society and in part because these dreams, fears, and visions were not easily reconcilable with liberal society as it had been constituted. Living the modern was about living with conflict, unpredictability, and difference—and few would be able to adjust to it as easily as did “the divine Sarah.”

The Modern Experience

Europeans did not agree on what it meant to be modern, nor did they all celebrate the coming of the modern. But most did feel that a break with the past was under way, whether that break was in economic life, political relations, or architecture. What felt different was, first of all, the new scale on which life was being lived. More people than ever before in European history were living in big cities, voting in elections, and perusing newspapers. Buildings, ships, and factory workplaces were bigger than ever. Second, people, goods, and ideas could travel faster than ever before, by railway and steamship, by means of mass-circulated newspapers and magazines, by telegraph and telephone. Finally, especially for the affluent, the variety of possible experiences had increased at a rate unprecedented in history. By the 1880s, middle-class Europeans could visit the Holy Land or read Russian novels in translation; they could ride bicycles or buy ready-made furniture. By 1910, they could drive cars or see movies, experiences their parents could scarcely imagine.

At the nineteenth century’s end, Europe was booming, in more ways than one. Demographically speaking, Europe’s share of the world’s population in 1900 was larger than ever before—or since—reaching 24 percent, compared to 20.8 percent in 1850 and 12 percent in 2000. Its industrial output was growing exponentially as the world’s demand for steel, oil, glass, fertilizers, soap, and textiles soared. Some entrepreneurs profited handsomely from the frenetic building of railroads and battleships. Others grew rich by exploiting colonial commodities, such as diamonds, tea, and rubber. Those who could afford them bought bicycles, or later, motor cars, increasing traffic speed and urban congestion.

For the people who experienced them, these changes in scale, speed, and variety were both exhilarating and terrifying. As usual in times of change, there would be losers as well as winners in the course of European modernization. While Sarah Bernhardt rocketed to star-

dom, the older culture of street performances faded. As Singer sewing machines took the world by storm, tailoring businesses suffered. The pace at which new ways were replacing the old also differed greatly, being swiftest and most pronounced for urban dwellers, especially those in western rather than southern, eastern, or southeastern Europe. Even still-agrarian Russia began to industrialize, and in 1905, both workers and peasants rose in rebellion against the czarist government. Change in one sphere—such as the economy—did not necessarily mean change in all, but everywhere rapid and widespread changes unsettled mid-century hierarchies, institutions, and expectations.

The beginnings of this rapid change date to about the 1870s, as continental Europe began to adjust to German unification and its consequences (see Chapter 19). At the same time, a wave of new technologies, communications linkages, and investment practices laid the foundations for what has been called the second industrial revolution. The first experiment in socialist governance, the Paris Commune (January–May 1871), and its bloody repression by an army under *liberal* control marks another sort of watershed, as radicals learned not to trust liberals even in republican France. The banking crisis of 1873 opened a new era in economic relations, one in which there were more booms and busts, and in which larger entities, including large-scale manufacturers and labor unions, tried to constrain the free market to serve their own interests. Finally, after 1870, the real wages of Europeans began to rise, mortality rates fell, and as cities added mass transport systems, sewers, and parks, living conditions improved. Suffrage—at least for men—continued to expand, making it possible for reformers, especially



London, c. 1910 By 1910, London’s streets were crowded not only with pedestrians and horse-drawn wagons, but also with buses and private motor cars.

in cities, to push through new legislation. Censorship largely disappeared (except in Russia), and labor unions and socialist parties were legalized.

But many people found the pace of social change far too slow to suit their expectations, and most members of the working classes did not feel that the decision making had been satisfactorily democratized, nor did they believe that the new wealth was being distributed fairly. As they were keenly aware, Europe's monarchs and old aristocracy, as well as the now well-established liberals, wanted to keep power concentrated in their hands. Some gave up on Europe entirely. From the 1870s, we can date the opening of the age of what historian Alfred Crosby called "the Caucasian tsunami," during which nearly 30 million Europeans migrated abroad.² Others joined one of the new political parties—socialist, anarchist, Christian socialist, and right-wing nationalist—all of which worked to mobilize new voters *against* Europe's political establishments. Increasingly, liberals and conservatives had to face up to the fact that a new era of mass politics was dawning—and that it would prove increasingly difficult for the elite few to determine the futures of their states.

Culturally the 1870s saw the development of new ideas and technologies, including the first real alternative to the steam engine, the four-stroke gas engine (1876); the telephone (also 1876); and the incandescent lamp (1879). Typewriters came onto the market, and with them, gradually, a whole new, largely female, workforce of typists, and above them, scores of male middle-managers. Thanks to both the increasing size of armies and the expansion of public schooling, literacy rates soared. Thanks to technological improvements and the curtailing of censorship, books and newspapers became relatively cheaper, more diverse, and more accessible.

Spectator sports were born in this decade. The first professional baseball league was formed in the United States, and the first international soccer match (between England and Scotland) was played. Though he would become famous only later, German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in the 1870s mounted his first assaults on idealist philosophy and bourgeois values. Scientists began to admit that the operations of the world were more uncertain than they had previously thought; painters and writers began to veer away from realism in order to understand human emotions and irrational drives. The decades that followed would see even greater dynamism, diversity, and forms of mobility so novel and far-reaching as to permanently destabilize the states, families, and social hierarchies of the mid-nineteenth century.

The New Mobility

One striking aspect of the world of the *fin de siècle* was the new mobility many Europeans could now enjoy—although this mobility was often occasioned by economic necessity and created new anxieties. The period of enhanced mobility opened with the coming of the rail-

roads and the famine years of the 1840s, but it peaked in the decades before the First World War. The causes of this new mobility were multiple: they included falling prices for agricultural products, which made factory work look more lucrative; the expansion of large-scale manufacturing and its concentration near ports or other transportation hubs; the greater affordability of means of transportation; and finally, rising expectations, which allowed Europeans to dream of lives of plenty and personal fulfillment beyond their hometowns.

GOODBYE, EUROPE. Emigration from Europe was the most dramatic form of this new mobility, and the number of migrants increased exponentially at the *fin de siècle*. Whereas some 9 million people left Europe between 1845 and 1875, three times that many (27.6 million) emigrated between 1871 and 1891, an average of 1.38 million per year (Figure 21.1). This annual figure held steady between 1891 and 1914, though by this time, Ireland and Germany were sending proportionally many fewer, and Italy and Scotland sending many more. Many of the migrants set sail for the United States, where they hoped to share in the universal prosperity promised by steamship company propagandists. Some did prosper, among them Austrian emigrant Joseph Pulitzer, who made a fortune in newspaper publishing by appealing to the common reader and engaging in ruthless battles over circulation. Many migrants, however, ended up working for starvation wages and living in overcrowded slums in New York, New Orleans, or Chicago, hoping that their children, at least, would enjoy better lives.

America's economy certainly profited from the seemingly endless number of eager European laborers willing to work for low wages, and their diversity contributed to the making of America's cultural melting pot. But between 1871 and 1914, some 4.5 million Europeans also moved to Argentina in search of a better life. Another 4.6 million went to Canada, and 2 million landed in Australia and New Zealand. One and one-half million settlers, many of them French speakers, set out for northern Africa, and more than two million Russians moved from western Russia to the Siberian hinterland between 1900 and 1914. All these migrants brought European traditions, ideas, and practices to their new homelands.

HELLO, PARIS, LONDON, BERLIN. The Caucasian tsunami described previously represented the largest population movement across oceans in history, and it shaped the modern development of neo-Europes such as the United States and Canada. But equally or even more important for shaping culture back home in Europe were processes of *internal* migration, as peasants and villagers moved in droves to the booming and expanding cities (Map 21.1). There they became wage earners, rather than farmers who bartered for supplies or lived off their own produce. With their wages, the new arrivals increasingly bought inexpensive mass-produced clothing, railway tickets, and

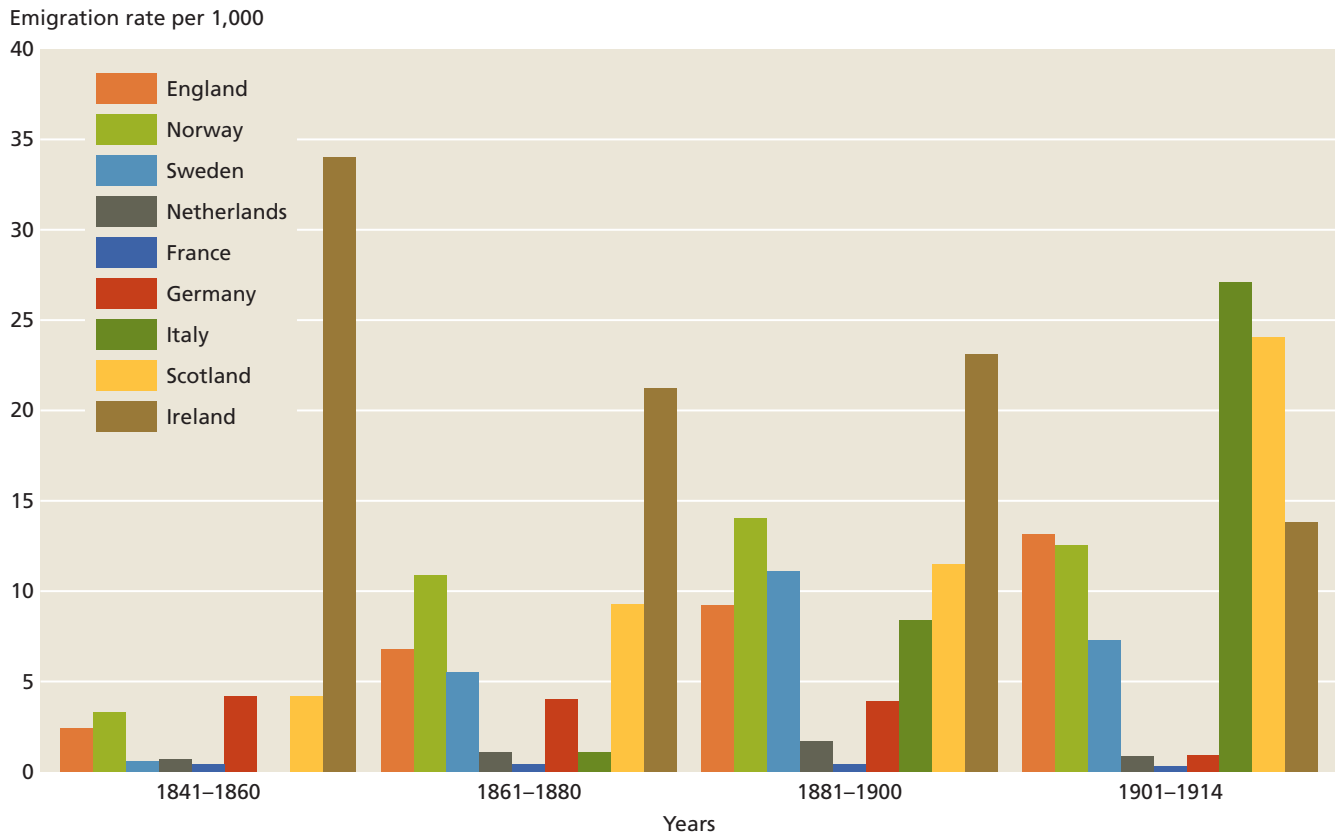


FIGURE 21.1 | Average Rates of European Emigration, 1841–1914

This bar graph represents the annual emigration rate per thousand individuals who emigrated from select European nations between the 1840s and the outbreak of the First World War. Thus, between 1841 and 1860, an average of about thirty-four individuals per thousand members of the Irish population emigrated to other countries. Although the numbers are impressive, as many as 40 percent of these individuals eventually returned to Europe.

Source: Synthesized by Jason M. Wolfe from Dudley Baines, *Immigration from Europe, 1815–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2–4; and Charlotte Erickson, *Emigration from Europe, 1815–1914* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1976), 27–29.

newspapers, each purchase contributing to the specialization of the economy, the mechanization of manufacturing, and the building of mass, urbanized societies.

The Fin de Siècle Metropolis

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, some rather sleepy small cities transformed themselves overnight into teeming metropolitan hubs. Berlin experienced extraordinary growth, its population expanding from about 420,000 in 1850 to more than 2 million by 1905. By 1900, nine European cities had populations over a million; the largest was London, with a whopping 4.2 million by 1891, up from 1.9 million in 1841. That figure represented between one-fifth and one-sixth of Britain’s entire population. Although other nations were not nearly so intensively urban, London’s expansion signaled a Europe-wide trend: the shifting of the population, and with it much of the states’ economic and political power, from the countryside to the now-bustling cities.

Fin de siècle cities were by no means paradises, where all people lived together harmoniously. Instead, the cities were increasingly class segregated, as lower-class

residents were concentrated in dilapidated old buildings, often near smoky factories or polluted rivers. The less affluent were forced to settle in working-class suburbs on the edge of town. White-collar workers, meanwhile, bought row houses or fashionable flats, and the wealthy bought villas in increasingly segregated neighborhoods far away from dirty factories or crowded slums. In 1900, in most cities, only the very wealthy could afford to have porcelain bathtubs, electricity, and telephones—but middle-class residents were beginning to enjoy amenities such as running water and regular trash pickups. Everywhere, the poor were the last to be hooked up to the public sewers or electric grids. Their unsanitary quarters made them more susceptible to disease, and the hesitancy of the municipal authorities to improve conditions contributed heavily to their exasperation with mid-century *laissez-faire* liberalism.

Urban dwellers at the fin de siècle consumed more food per capita and in many places enjoyed easier access to clean water than had their forebears. But it is not certain that levels of nutrition or hygiene improved markedly. There remained little in the way of regulation, and mass-marketed foodstuffs were regularly adulterated to



MAP 21.1 | Railroads and Big Cities, c. 1914

Western Europe's rail network expanded greatly between 1870 and 1914, just when many of its cities were also growing rapidly. This map shows areas of high industrialization as well as cities with a population that had exceeded one million by 1914. **Which areas developed an extensive rail network only after 1870? What does this map tell you about the relationships among industrialization, urbanization, and railroad building?**

reduce production costs. Coffee beans were made from clay or paste mixed with burnt sugar; and all manner of additives, including the leaves and berries of the poisonous belladonna plant, were used to reduce the cost of beer production. In southern Germany, inspectors found that egg noodles had been made by mixing cheap dough with picric acid and urine to give the noodles a yellow coloring; gypsum and chalk were added to flour to make white bread cheaper to produce. Tampering with foodstuffs became so common—and occasionally even lethal—that by the century's end, nations began to set up investigating units and pass laws to restrain the practice.

In the later nineteenth century, states also began to build public bathing facilities and toilets in urban areas, but they never managed to build enough. Only the very elite

had running *hot* water in their homes. Most city dwellers still depended on public fountains or urban water-sellers or took their water from polluted rivers and ports. Many people still feared that bathing more than once a month would cause illness; some continued to raise chickens or pigs in their urban backyards. Infectious diseases, especially tuberculosis, were rampant in factory towns, where air pollution intensified their effects. Of course, lower-class inhabitants could not afford to buy fresh foods, install bathtubs, or take spa vacations to cure their lungs; as usual, the poor bore the brunt of the city's new evils.

Mass transportation made the creation of big cities and distant suburbs possible, and over the course of the century's last decades, innovations in mass transport were nothing short of miraculous. By the 1880s, train travel

between cities had become efficient and inexpensive, at least in northern Europe. Within cities, the horse-drawn omnibus came first, followed by electrified trams and then underground subway systems. The first of its kind, the London Underground was able to carry 30,000 people on its first day of operation in 1863, and by 1880 it was carrying 40 million riders a year. The Paris Métro opened in 1900 and the Berlin U-bahn in 1902—but other systems were slower to develop. The Moscow metro opened only in 1933, and construction on the Milan metro did not begin until 1957. Where they did appear, these systems could move tens of thousands of people per day.

These new transport systems had accompanying cultural effects, such as the erecting of newsstands near station stops and the production of newspapers in tabloid formats that could be read easily on trains. At least in theory, mass transit allowed persons who inhabited many different neighborhoods to share the same city, though in fact the upper classes continued to prefer private conveyances and to stick to their districts. Lower-class workers (other than the omnipresent servants) were made to feel uncomfortable and unwelcome in exclusive areas such as London's Belgravia or Berlin's Grünewald.

Mass transportation extended over larger areas as well. As steamship travel became more affordable, more and more Europeans ventured abroad, not just as emigrants or colonial settlers, but also as tourists. Taking advantage of their new wealth and their superior political and economic positions as colonizers, European travelers packed their bags for Egypt, India, and South America, often taking with them the handy new travel guides published by the Karl Baedeker Press. Many English travelers opted for the package tours offered by Thomas Cook, founder of the first modern tourist agency. European archaeologists and zoologists eagerly seized the new opportunities, dragging home to Europe even more exotic monuments and animals to stock museums and zoos. Travel writers had to venture even farther to interest armchair readers. Those who did were able to tour the world as celebrities. Thanks to his adventures in Tibet and the Taklamakan Desert, the Swede Sven Hedin did become internationally famous. His books earned huge royalties in England, Germany, the United States, and Japan.

If Europeans could move more freely throughout the world, the world was also coming to western Europe. After 1881 a wave of eastern European Jews moved not only into central Europe's bigger cities, but also to London, where they established Yiddish-speaking districts, shops, and theaters. Elite students from the Ottoman Empire, Japan, and India came to Heidelberg or Paris to learn European sciences and arts; some picked up socialist ideas as well. There was also considerable traffic between Europe and other parts of the world at the lower end of the social scale; every port city teemed with sailors from far-flung parts. One American visitor to the White Swan pub in London was horrified to see "scores of women of all countries and shades of colour . . . dancing with Danes, Americans, Swedes, Spaniards, Russians, Negroes, Chinese, Malays,

Italians and Portuguese in one hell-medley of abomination."³ This variety may have scandalized the American, though he could have seen the same in the dance halls of New York or San Francisco. But it also testified to just how much the new mobility was reshaping European experience at home.

Social Mobility—and Its Limits

In addition to physical mobility, the fin de siècle also brought increases in social mobility. New access to education, mass transit, and print media allowed many of those who had once lived rather isolated lives to move in circles previously closed to them. As new jobs opened up for state bureaucrats, middle-level managers, doctors, lawyers, and bankers, the middle class expanded, though artisans and small shopkeepers, their jobs threatened by the new department stores and mass-producing industries, also worried about *downward* mobility. The new opportunities for mobility were concentrated in the cities, whereas in rural areas, the aristocratic elite employed modern forms of financing, marketing, and political lobbying to turn older forms of landed wealth and noble dominance into leading positions in Europe's evolving class society.

The new social mobility was built, in part, on education, something even the absolutist monarchs had realized was crucial for modernizing their societies. Nation-states too recognized that public education was vital in building a productive workforce and a loyal citizenry. Even conservatives could, in the end, be persuaded that education might be useful in making the lower classes obedient servants and God-fearing Christians (for many elementary schools were still operated by the churches). Accordingly, state governments increasingly required children to attend elementary school and to learn to read and write the national language. By the fin de siècle, most children under the age of twelve were expected to attend school for at least part of the day.

Some children from working-class families delighted in the books and ideas available to them in the public schools, and a few managed to move up in the world. The number of students attending secondary schools and universities increased. But many children, especially in rural eastern and southern Europe, learned little more than basic literacy (if that) before they were pushed out into the labor force. Secondary education remained limited to the middle and upper classes and heavily based on the learning of classical languages, despite the advances made in some places by advocates of more utilitarian forms of schooling. The dawn of the age of mass public education opened the way for some social mobility, but the impact of education in this period should not be overestimated. Learning remained very much dependent on a person's class.

Women in Motion

Women's mobility had always been more circumscribed than that of their husbands and brothers. But the new

economy and new forms of transportation offered women a few opportunities to try new lifestyles. The rise of factory labor meant that lower-class women, increasingly, were not working in their homes, but on the shop floor. Their new jobs gave them some independence, but women remained largely responsible for the household labor, cooking, shopping, cleaning, sewing, and child care. Some younger (and usually single) women could obtain jobs in the growing cities as salesclerks, typists, nurses, or waitresses and dispose of their own income, though their wages, lower than those of men in comparable jobs, usually did not give them much to dispose of. A lucky few who had been allowed to pursue their educations managed to land jobs as journalists, teachers, or even doctors, but they were usually restricted to writing about, teaching, and treating other women.

Perhaps even more important in the long run were the increasing number of middle-class housewives whose husbands' rising paychecks allowed them *not* to work. These women were able to devote themselves to activities such as prison reform, temperance, and urban renewal, or forms of self-improvement such as reading, organizing singing groups, or writing local histories. Their indefatigable efforts in recruiting volunteers, drawing attention to unmet needs, stimulating civic spirit, and keeping all sorts of local institutions running would make these women indispensable in the making of modern, urban societies.

The women most impatient to participate fully in the changing world around them were the **suffragettes**, the female activists who sought to win the vote for women now that virtually all men had that right. By 1910, women had won important rights in Britain, France, and Germany, including the right to divorce their husbands, to own property in their own names, and to attend universities. But they still could not vote. Lack of this right inspired many women to join suffrage campaigns, most of them peaceful. The Women's Social and Political Union, founded by British suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst (1858–1928) in 1903, however, rejected rhetoric in favor of more militant tactics. Members of the union chained themselves to the visitors' gallery in the House of Commons, set fire to politicians' houses, and used acid to burn "Votes for Women" into the grass on golf courses. The result was equally violent treatment by police, who threw protestors into jail and force-fed those who attempted hunger strikes.

Male society did not, on the whole, look favorably on suffragettes or on women who pursued higher edu-



The Typing Pool, 1907 By the turn of the century, typewriters were in widespread use, and more women than ever before were being hired as secretaries and typists, displacing the male clerks and scribes who had performed most of the (handwritten) office work of the past.

cation and permanent careers. Some alarmists warned that educating women was the first step in destroying the family; others insisted that women could not study the sciences because their brains were inherently irrational. Brilliant scholars such as Marie Curie (1867–1934), who shared the Nobel Prize for chemistry with her husband Pierre and took his chair at the Collège de France when he died, proved these claims baseless. In women's lives, as in many other aspects of European society, the volatility and dynamism of the *fin de siècle* created both new opportunities and new anxieties, new kinds of diversity that to some were exhilarating—and to others terrifying.

I The New Culture(s)

There is no dispute that the cultural world of the *fin de siècle* offered novelty in many forms. Culture in an era that now self-consciously called itself modern was both much more richly varied and more accessible to Europeans than ever before. What *modern* meant was

Why did popular culture come of age at the *fin de siècle*?

in dispute then and continues to be disputed now, but we can focus on two essentially different kinds of cultural *modernism*. First, this period saw the emergence of a truly mass culture, the making and sharing of cultural forms and practices designed to be accessible and appealing to a wide audience of consumers. Second, and partly in reaction to the rise of mass culture, was the birth of

cultural forms that writers and artists called **avant-garde** (“ahead of the rest”). Whether by intention or not, avant-garde culture appealed to those who liked to be on what we would call the cutting edge or who disdained the pedestrian tastes of the masses.

It is possible here to offer only a brief survey of cultural developments, which range from the beginnings of modern spectator sports to the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. Modern culture—mass and elite—was born simultaneously, and even though its practitioners and consumers were often quite different, these individuals inhabited the same rapidly industrializing and urbanizing world, one in which liberalism, with its belief in the rational individual and its fear of the masses, was increasingly coming under fire. Just as some places in Europe had been little touched by liberalism, some were little affected by cultural modernization. Rural areas in southern and eastern countries were again largely left out. But the scale and speed of changes under way did eventually bring newspapers and circuses to consumers far from the avant-garde cities.

Mass Culture

There had always been “popular” culture outside the courts, universities, and high church circles, but until the mid-to-late nineteenth century, popular culture remained a relatively undeveloped sphere for one important reason: there wasn’t much money in it. But as printing and paper costs fell and as literacy rates soared, as more and more governments allowed for freer presses, and as cities grew, the print market boomed. Culture could now be made accessible to the masses, and it could be sold for a profit. Publishers learned quickly that scandal sold papers, and newspapers began to feature sensational stories about love affairs, round-the-world travels, and murder trials. In 1888, for example, the newspaper coverage of the mutilation of Jack the Ripper’s victims was so graphic that tabloids today would hesitate to print the same details.

Founded in 1896, *The Daily Mail* of London made another concession to readers with lower levels of literacy and less time to peruse the papers: it put world news in bulletin form. Its price, a half-penny, also appealed so greatly that the first issue sold nearly 400,000 copies, and the *Mail* soon began to wield wide political influence. The print market also expanded in terms of its diversity as periodicals began to cater to specialized readerships, such as Czech nationalists or German women living abroad. Books and journals were now published specifically for working-class readers and also for children and young adults. Boys’ adventure stories, like Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885), sold especially well, as did religious literature aimed at the lower classes.

Of course, mass culture was not exclusively a reading culture. There were also new opportunities to enjoy music and the visual arts. Once private courtly affairs, concerts were now much more widely accessible and ticket prices



Marie Lloyd The music hall entertainer Marie Lloyd became so popular that some of her signature songs were marketed as sheet music.

affordable for most people. Pianos became more affordable, and sales of popular sheet music soared. The working classes tended to prefer lighter fare, offered in their neighborhoods in the form of music hall or public house (pub) entertainment. This was a booming industry by 1910—though many of its greater performers’ names are no longer known to us. One of those who did earn widespread acclaim was Marie Lloyd (1870–1922), the daughter of a poor artificial flower maker. Her captivating performances in working-class venues made her a music hall star at sixteen, and she was earning about \$3,000 a week before she was twenty. Despite being an alcoholic with a notoriously foul mouth and terrible taste in men, Marie Lloyd, the lower-class equivalent of Sarah Bernhardt, was well known and even well respected. At her death, the great poet T. S. Eliot paid tribute to her “genius.”

The visual arts, too, became more accessible to people of lesser means. Many first experienced painting by visiting one of the panorama displays available in European cities and towns by the 1860s. New museums opened their doors to wider audiences and offered free days for those who could not afford the entrance fees. But the big changes in visual culture undoubtedly came with the development of dry plate photography in the 1880s. This innovation reduced exposure time to seconds, making it

possible for photographs to capture more lifelike expressions and events. As it became less expensive to print photographs and colored plates, popular publications like Germany's *Art for All* could send their readers colored reproductions, suitable for framing.

The final and most impressive development in fin de siècle mass culture was the motion picture. Brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière screened ten short films for a paying audience in Paris in December 1895. After this first experiment, the genre took off quickly. By 1912, London had five hundred cinemas, Berlin had three hundred; even more provincial Budapest could boast ninety-two theaters showing films. Some middle-class viewers found the films too indecent or frivolous, but soon discovered that their sons and daughters loved them. Sarah Bernhardt made the leap into films quite early, appearing in her first in 1900. She would continue to make films even after the amputation of her right leg in 1915. Indeed, she was filming a movie, *La Voyante* (*The Fortune Teller*), when she died in 1923.

We are used to seeing fin de siècle popular culture as predominately secular and urban, and indeed many producers of films and newspapers targeted audiences of these kinds. But we often overlook the fact that a majority of Europeans remained believing Christians and, in most places, remained rural dwellers, even as the new cities boomed. At the fin de siècle, these people too began to be drawn into broader movements of various kinds. They joined national religious organizations and read mass-marketed devotional books, the descendants of Luis de Granada's *Book of Prayer and Meditation*. And in new numbers they undertook a much older form of travel: the pilgrimage.

Modernism—without the Masses

To generalize about the innovative and largely elitist culture of the fin de siècle is risky, but the period did see something like a return to early-nineteenth-century romanticism—without, however, the naiveté that characterized much of that earlier form. **Modernism** in the arts and sciences was a movement that acknowledged the deep power of subconscious drives and the limitations humans faced in obtaining direct knowledge of the world. It also sought to find abstractions and an internationally understandable language to tame these deeper forces and make communication and science possible nonetheless.



Arnold Böcklin, *The Isle of the Dead* (1883) In this endlessly reproduced symbolist painting, the combination of a mythological theme and a surreal rendering of Mediterranean scenery invited viewers to contemplate the elemental mystery of death. Sigmund Freud and Vladimir Lenin each had a copy.

Modernism demanded that artists, writers, and scientists break away from traditions of the past that were no longer applicable or relevant and seek bold new forms of expression, even if that meant their work would not seem beautiful or accessible to the wider public of the present.

Some writers, artists, and musicians also abandoned realism and impressionism for styles such as symbolism or art nouveau. **Art nouveau** ("new art") featured stylized organic forms rather than forms rendered according to the increasingly hackneyed laws of perspective. It was favored especially by artists working in the minor arts, such as glass-making, jewelry making, interior decorating, and poster and book design. Another popular artistic style of the period was **symbolism**, in which artists used symbols or mythological figures to imply hidden psychological meanings or mysteries. Whereas the romantics of the early nineteenth century had hoped that eventually one could solve the riddles of the sphinx, for symbolist painters of the late nineteenth century, such as Gustave Moreau (1826–1898), the sphinx represented the eternally mysterious and bisexual core of human existence. The beauty to be contemplated in these forms and images was neither rational nor strictly natural; the mythologizing in them was meant to draw viewers out of their historical context to reflect on universal themes—human beings' sexual instincts, the rituals invented to tame death's pain.

As European power in the world reached its zenith, artists and writers began to worry that it could not last and that excessive consumption, pleasure seeking, and pride would lead to disaster. In his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) allowed his decadent aristocrat, Dorian Gray, briefly to escape the banality of everyday life into a life of vice, but in the end, Gray meets disaster. There is a powerful sense of foreboding in virtually all the later plays of Norwegian

Lourdes and the Mass Pilgrimage

We have learned to see late-nineteenth-century European society as a predominantly secular one, characterized by socialism and steel production. But how secular was this society? If we look closely, considerable evidence indicates that religious sentiment was still alive and well. Many of the new political parties called themselves Christian socialists, and many broad-based civic associations, such as the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), acknowledged their roots in religious communities. Some religious confraternities were huge—the Confraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, founded in Paris in 1836, is said to have had more than a million members in 1880. Religious books continued to outsell secular ones. But perhaps the most striking proof that not all Europeans had given up on faith comes from the revitalization of a much older form of Catholic piety in the century's last decades: the pilgrimage.

Catholic Christians had never ceased making pilgrimages to holy sites, though the practice had been disrupted by the enlightened absolutists, French revolutionaries, and liberal nationalists, who discouraged public exhibitions of piety. Liberals, especially Protestant liberals, tended to be anticlerical and considered popular devotional practices like the worship of saints or the veneration of relics to be superstitious and antimodern. The Catholic Church had suffered considerable decline in its status after 1789. It had lost most of its land in France, and many of its priests, monks, and nuns had been persecuted or even executed. In 1870, the pope had been forced to cede control of the city of Rome, his last piece of secular territory, to the newly founded Italian kingdom. In France the archbishop of Paris had been murdered during the period of the Commune's radical rule, and in Germany the *Kulturkampf* sought to break the clergy's loyalty to Rome and the lay Catholics' loyalty to the pope in the name of modernization and German patriotism. But even as liberals succeeded in secularizing many of Europe's formal institutions, a wave of popular religiosity surged up from beneath, giving the lie to the liberals' contention that they represented "the people" as a whole. The new forms of faith tended to emphasize emotions—suffering, love, and sorrow—over doctrine, and appealed most powerfully to women, which may explain why the Virgin Mary played so central a role in inciting a new set of pilgrimages.



The Virgin Mary Appears at Lourdes, c. 1890 This popular representation of the Virgin Mary appearing to the humble peasant girl Bernadette Soubirous in the grotto near Lourdes was one of millions produced after Lourdes became a mass pilgrimage site in the later 1870s.

As in earlier times, the pilgrims of the late nineteenth century set off to visit places where visions or miraculous healings had taken place. There was no shortage of such sites in the heavily Catholic Rhineland region or in the Pyrenees Mountains, where in 1858 the most widely publicized and controversial of such visions occurred. The seer in this case was a very young, poor, and rather sickly girl, Bernadette Soubirous, daughter of an uncaring mother and a father who worked as a rag collector. Bernadette saw eighteen visions of the Virgin Mary in a mountain grotto; the apparition instructed the girl to build a chapel there, near a healing spring.

As historian Ruth Harris describes in her study titled *Lourdes* (1999), fourteen-year-old Bernadette did not back down on her claims, despite being questioned by the police and several prosecutors, all of whom tried to get her to retract her story. Even some members of the clergy were dubious. Some feared being ridiculed in the press for having fallen for a little girl's fantasies. Others feared that the laity was becoming dangerously independent from church teachings and practices. Despite the authorities' attempts to close off the grotto, people came, hoping to see the Virgin Mary themselves, longing for miraculous cures. Eventually, the authorities gave in, and in 1876, some 35 bishops, 5,000 priests, and 100,000 lay Catholics were on hand to witness the consecration of a statue to the Virgin at Lourdes. A new road, connecting the site to the railway, was built and a complex of buildings arose, making it possible for large numbers of pilgrims to visit Lourdes, to partake of its healing waters, and to purchase souvenirs of their visit. The age of mass pilgrimages had begun.

Bernadette was by no means the only person of her age to see visions, nor were all mass pilgrimages Marian ones. In 1891, two million visitors traveled to Trier—many of them by train—to see the Holy Coat, said to be the seamless garment worn by Christ before his crucifixion. And, with the cheapening of transportation and the completion of rail lines to Mecca and Medina, Muslim participation in the hadj also soared. The same technology and social forces that made possible the development and spread of international socialism made possible the revival of the pilgrimage.

QUESTION | *What does the story of Lourdes tell us about secularization in the nineteenth century?*

dramatist Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906), a foreboding that comes from the sense that liberal values will end not in social harmony, but in disaster. Like the composer Richard Wagner, and the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Ibsen was enormously popular with the generation of writers and artists who came of age at the fin de siècle. None of them believed in progress, and all were sure individuals would commit reckless, irrational acts simply to establish the existence of free will. It was at the fin de siècle, too, that western Europeans discovered the non-European elegance of the work of Indian poet and novelist Rabindranath Tagore, who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1910. Voices and critiques from Europe's periphery now seemed particularly timely, and their challenges to liberal, Eurocentric ways of thinking profoundly inspiring, as well as troubling.

Like creative geniuses in all eras, fin de siècle writers spent a great deal of time criticizing the work of the generation before their own, whose realism they saw as superficial description dressed up as literature. Impressionism and realism failed to explore the depth and irrational elements of human self-consciousness, the new generation complained. European conventions and the banalities of the marketplace were preventing westerners from experiencing life in its most elemental and truest forms. The answer, for some, was to escape to distant and supposedly exotic places, as did the poet Arthur Rimbaud (1854–1891) and the painter Paul Gauguin (1848–1903). Leaving behind poetic stardom, his lover poet Paul Verlaine, and a dissolute life, laced with hashish and absinthe, Rimbaud left Europe in 1876 for Java. He subsequently settled in northern Africa, where he took an Ethiopian mistress and abandoned writing poems about his torments in favor of trading coffee. Gauguin had already abandoned impressionism and naturalistic color and form before he set sail in 1891 for Tahiti. Like many Europeans before him, Gauguin hoped to find in Tahiti the lost Eden that modern Europe had completely forgotten. He sought to strip himself and his art of “everything that is artificial and conventional.” Indeed, he would find not only love, but also inspiration in his encounters with Tahitian women and Tahitian traditional arts and crafts. Perhaps Rimbaud and Gauguin would have been gratified by the success their creations enjoyed in Europe, but neither of them ever came home. Real life, they believed, was elsewhere.

Breaking with Conventions

Unlike Rimbaud and Gauguin, most writers, artists, and musicians did not leave Europe, but simply attempted to escape old forms. Painters Pablo Picasso and Wassily Kandinsky sought to abandon the laws of perspective; Picasso's pioneering *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907), for example, depicted its female subjects as if viewed through shattered bits of glass. The inspiration for their faces came from the African masks Picasso (1881–1973) saw in Paris's ethnographic museum. Modernist ar-



Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907) In this painting, Picasso broke with the long tradition of treating the canvas as a window, with the figures drawn using conventions of perspectival drawing. Instead, Picasso treated the canvas as a two-dimensional surface. In his attempt to capture the raw and tragic lives of these sex workers, Picasso was inspired by African masks.

chitects stripped historicizing decoration from their buildings, proclaiming, as did Austrian architect Adolf Loos, “ornament is crime!” It was wrong, he claimed, to obscure the function and modern origin of buildings by trying to disguise them as Gothic churches or Greek temples. Loos's German contemporaries, Peter Behrens and Walter Gropius, agreed. Between 1911 and 1913, Gropius (1883–1969) designed and built the Fagus Factory, which manufactured shoe lasts, using glass curtain walls to unite the building's exterior and interior and to provide a lighter, airier workspace for employees. Modernist architects were more inclined than any other group of artists to embrace that most modern of fixtures, the machine. Most others found machines inhumane and uninspiring—with the exception of the Italian and Russian Futurists, small groups of poets and painters who tried to make their work sing with the steam trains and evoke the speed of shiny new race cars.

In poetry, both realism and Victorian high diction gave way to interior dialogues and attempts to evoke the mythological and mysterious. The Irish poet and playwright William Butler Yeats drew on ancient Gaelic poems as well as Japanese dramas in the attempt to stretch the boundaries of representation. French poets such as Rimbaud and Verlaine tried to cultivate synesthesia, the mixing together of the senses. In Germany, the symbolist poet Stefan George had his poems printed in a typeface modeled on his own esoteric style of handwriting. In literature, too, writers began to experiment with

time and space, breaking away from the conventions of realism. French writer Marcel Proust's *Swann's Way* (1913) narrated the contents of a young man's memory—as it related to tales of another, aristocratic, man's love life; *Swann's Way* would prove the first of the seven novels Proust (1871–1922) called *In Search of Lost Time*.

Although still enraptured by the pioneering work of Richard Wagner (see Chapter 19), musical composers strayed further and further from traditional tonal harmonies, drawing on the work of modernist contemporaries in literature and philosophy and provoking controversy even among elite connoisseurs. Austrian composer Richard Strauss (1864–1949) shocked his countrymen with the futuristic dissonances in his tone poems such as *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1896), a work inspired by the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. The decadent themes of Strauss's opera *Salomé* (1905)—in which the leading lady exults in kissing the dead lips of John the Baptist—were also highly controversial. Strauss's *Salomé* was inspired by Oscar Wilde's play of the same name. Similarly, a symbolist poem by Stéphane Mallarmé inspired French composer Claude Debussy (1862–1918) to write "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun." When the handsome Russian ballet dancer Alexander Nijinsky danced the piece barefooted and with overtly sexualized gestures in Paris in 1912, the performance caused a sensation and a revolution in ballet. The harsh dissonance of Russian composer Ivan Stravinsky's primitivist tone poem, *Rite of Spring*, provoked a riot on its premiere in Paris in 1913.

Modernism in the Sciences

The juxtaposition of the coming of mass society and the neo-romanticism of the fin de siècle made for watershed developments in the fledgling social sciences. Positivism, with its optimistic hopes for perfecting society through the application of universal laws, was rejected increasingly in favor of the analysis of irrational behaviors. In his pioneering work, *Suicide* (1897), French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) suggested that increased rates of suicide in the modern West had their origin in urban, industrial *anomie*, or alienation. Durkheim's later work sought in other ways to comprehend what modern society had lost, focusing on religions and rituals that had created the glue holding together pre-modern societies. Sociologist Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931) also studied a phenomenon of particular interest at the fin de siècle: the behavior of crowds. Le Bon lamented the loss of individual reasoning powers that occurred in crowds, but his analy-



Walter Gropius, the Fagus Factory Completed in 1913, this innovative factory building displayed architect Walter Gropius's desire to remove decorative clutter and to allow natural light to penetrate to the structure's interior.

sis of the power of charismatic leaders to galvanize mob action fascinated the readers of his day. Like his younger Austrian and German counterparts, Sigmund Freud and Max Weber, Le Bon was essentially a political liberal, but his interest in subconscious processes marks him as a man of the fin de siècle (see Back to the Source at the end of the chapter). Weber (1864–1920) would be remembered for calling modern bureaucratic and technocratic society an "iron cage." Offering a glimpse of modern society's undersides, the new social scientists reminded their contemporaries that modernization had both its limits and its dangers.

Freud (1856–1939) did not consider himself a social scientist, but rather a doctor—a healer—of a quite new type. Concluding around 1900 that psychological disorders could be neither understood nor cured by purely medical means, Freud began to explore dreams as the means by which individuals might come to grips with their subconscious fears and desires. He concluded that early sexual fantasies—including the young boy's desire to replace his father (the Oedipus complex)—and subsequent attempts to repress them created psychic distress. Like the avant-garde artists, Freud offended his bourgeois contemporaries by plunging beneath the smooth surface of rational behavior to identify powerful and perhaps untamable forces operating below.

In philosophy, mathematics, and the natural sciences, rationalism and positivism gave way during the fin de siècle to various forms of neo-romanticism or post-positivist thinking. French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859–1941) argued that the brain did not operate according to strict principles of logic. Memory, for example, was a fluid force, not something that one could describe in an equation, but it was often more powerful than reason.

Similarly, Bergson argued, time, as humans actually experienced it, was often much different than time as measured by clocks. Following his lead, biologists sought to understand nonmechanical, instinctive, and creative forces that underlay the secrets of experience and organic life. Scientists began to examine memory and dreams, sexual desire, and telepathy, hoping to find rigorous ways to describe and perhaps tame these “irrational” forces.

The fin de siècle also saw breakthroughs in bacteriology and genetics. The French chemist Louis Pasteur (1822–1895) developed vaccines for rabies and anthrax and a process for heating milk and wine (subsequently known as pasteurization) to prevent the growth of bacteria. The British surgeon Joseph Lister showed how to use carbolic acid to sterilize medical equipment, a procedure that rapidly reduced the number of doctor-inflicted infections. Though completed decades earlier, the pioneering work of Austrian botanist Gregor Mendel in genetics became widely known after 1902. His work contributed to the breeding of better crops and to eugenic dreams of breeding “better” people.

In physics, Max Planck, Niels Bohr, and Albert Einstein laid the foundations for relativity theory. Their work destroyed the classic Newtonian physics on which the natural sciences had rested since the seventeenth century and offered new ways of conceptualizing the movement of light and matter. Perhaps most important, their work suggested that the universe is not completely continuous and fully knowable. We can never have the complete certainty about its workings that the positivists hoped we could ascertain by means of more and more experiments. The best we can obtain is *probable* understandings of the operations of the natural world. Although the new physics was little known and not at all understood outside of a small circle before 1918, it very much reflected the modernism of the fin de siècle.

The philosophers who became most influential among the avant-garde were Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche. Schopenhauer, who died in 1860, long before he achieved popularity, claimed that the world was a mere illusion, produced by individual consciousness. Informed by Buddhist philosophy, he argued that the only release from the pain of individuation lay in renouncing the world of representation or in aesthetic contemplation. As a young man, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) was briefly impressed by this pessimistic philosophy, but by the later 1870s was preaching heroic self-fashioning instead. In his *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883), Nietzsche gave the world a prophet of the new, life-embracing individualism he championed.

Behind all moral philosophies, including Christianity, Nietzsche claimed, lay a “will to power.” This was also the case for quests for scientific truth. In his view, understanding this will to power was the means to establish a philosophy that ranged “beyond good and evil.” Many of Nietzsche’s contemporaries accused him of moral relativism. Nietzsche has also been accused of championing “the blond beast” over and against racially inferior

others, especially Jews, but most scholars now agree that Nietzsche’s most egregious statements about race were later additions by his racist sister and brother-in-law. Nevertheless, Nietzsche’s works, such as *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), seem to romanticize a social Darwinist worldview in which the strong defeat the weak and humankind is better off for it. Though Nietzsche went mad in 1889 and died in 1900, his philosophy was well suited to an age in which the rapid pace of change seemed likely to leave all of bourgeois society’s values—reason, science, the free market, Christian brotherhood, and the rule of law—in the dustbin.

I The New Economies

To understand why tensions and anxieties mounted so high during an era of relative prosperity, we must examine the changes in the economies of Europe. Europe’s economies were booming in the late nineteenth century. With deeper imperial and commercial penetration of non-European markets came an unprecedented leap in global investments and exchanges.

What made the economic situation of the fin de siècle distinctive?

Businesses grew larger, often eating up competitors and suppliers along the way, and as the need for greater amounts of capital increased, banks became even more indispensable to commercial success. Entrepreneurs producing the same product, such as rye or coal, banded together to form **cartels**, powerful organizations that could fix prices and drive rival competitors out of business. There were fortunes to be made in heavy industrial products, such as steel and oil, and in consumer goods, such as soap and chocolate bars. Railroads were being built not only in Europe and North America, but also in Africa and in the Ottoman Empire. The market for tropical commodities such as rubber and diamonds boomed—to the profit of European buyers and the terrible suffering of African laborers.

Some people made their fortunes dishonestly. As a series of scandals showed, big capitalists were happy to pay off politicians to support their interests, and numerous leaders enriched themselves by accepting bribes. The crash of the Viennese stock market in May 1873 exposed the kickbacks and favors that linked the minister of commerce, the liberal party’s parliamentary leader, and railroad builders. It also showed that speculators could be punished for blind confidence in the free market. There was much new money to be made, but also a great deal of money to be *lost* in this global economy, and those who saw their fortunes crumble often gave up on economic liberalism for good.

Some of the biggest losers were agricultural producers. Two major factors—the linking of the Ukrainian and U.S. midwestern breadbaskets to urban marketplaces; and the expansion and improvement of farming in the Americas, southern Africa, and Southeast Asia—pushed grain prices

down, ruining the fortunes of numerous European landowners. Peasants flocked to the cities and factories seeking work; older aristocratic families sought advantageous marriages with the manufacturing elite. Meanwhile, skilled artisans lost status and numbers as machines began to take over some of their jobs. Abandoning the family farm, with its steady rhythms and traditional values, put people at risk of becoming economically or psychologically rootless and susceptible to new forms of oppression or poverty. Mass production—the making of identical things in huge quantities—affected not only the items being produced, but the bodies and lives of the producers as well.

The Second Industrial Revolution

By 1870s, communications and transportation networks had become fast and predictable enough to allow for the exploitation of efficiencies of scale and of new, more sophisticated, and specialized technologies. Bigger businesses formed, in steelmaking and chemicals, in machine production, and in consumer products. Steel was the metal of the era. It was more adaptable than iron and new processes for producing it, and doing so cheaply, meant that it could now be used in building ships, tall buildings, typewriters, and harvesting machines. Prices for machinery fell. Engineers developed ways to produce high-voltage alternating current, allowing electricity for homes and factories to be generated in central power plants. Once the new oil-burning engines had been installed in cars, trucks, and ships, the pace of commerce could be accelerated again—and again.

As noted in Chapter 18, the first Industrial Revolution had an uneven impact in Europe. Its home and heartland was England, and it soon spread to the Netherlands, northern France, and the German Rhineland. The **second industrial revolution**, similarly, did not occur everywhere at the same time, and its dependence on a more skilled workforce and on new technologies meant that it was especially pronounced not just in Britain, but also in the United States and in the newly united German Empire. By 1914, the United States, Britain, and Germany were still producing two-thirds of the world's industrial output—but Britain, which in 1870 had been responsible for 32 percent of the output, was now producing only 14 percent, Germany's share had risen from 13 percent to 16 percent, and the United States had surged from 23 percent to 36 percent of total production. Russia industrialized very late, but steel production and railroad building were progressing very rapidly there by 1910. In Russia, as elsewhere, one of the liveliest sectors of the industrial



Harvest in the Ukraine, 1880s Whereas western Europeans increasingly moved to cities to take jobs in the industrializing economy, in eastern Europe many peasants continued to work in the fields as their ancestors had done. Thanks to accelerated means of transportation, however, the wheat being harvested here could now be transported to markets far away.

economy was the production of weapons, battleships, and rail lines for military purposes. Everyone recognized that war would break out, sooner or later, and no one wanted to be left behind in what became an industrial arms race.

The second industrial revolution wasn't only about metals and machines. It was also about consumer goods. By 1900, the largest industrial operations in Britain were branded, packaged products such as Lever Brothers soap and Cadbury chocolates. U.S. businesses also invested in consumer products, and as early as the 1880s, mechanized canning was being used to produce nationally and internationally distributed products such as Campbell's soup and Borden's condensed milk. The United States was also highly successful in patenting and producing smaller, household machines. By 1913, demand for Singer sewing machines was so great that the company set up factories all over the world and was issuing sets of trading cards that featured women in local costumes proudly showing off their identical Singer machines.

As competition grew fiercer, both in global and in domestic markets, free trade, one of the great causes of mid-nineteenth-century liberals, began to lose its luster. Producers big and small grew disenchanted with supply-and-demand mechanisms and sought to circumvent them. Big industrialists, such as German armaments' manufacturer Alfred Krupp, attempted to create monopolies in the name of improving efficiency and, of course, profits. Farmers created cooperatives to fix prices and protect themselves from the market's volatility. Some states took over ownership of privately owned land, rail lines, telegraph networks, utilities, and roads to coordinate the development of communications and transportation systems. With the exception of Britain, few nations had fully embraced free trade and some now raised

The Department Store

One of the late nineteenth century's commercial innovations is still very much with us: the department store.⁴ This new and much larger enterprise began to appear in big cities such as Paris, London, and Chicago in the 1840s and 1850s, but had its heyday in the years just before the First World War. It evolved from haberdashery shops, which sold a variety of dry goods such as lingerie, cloth, gloves, and umbrellas. By the 1840s, one of the new department stores, the Ville de Paris, was employing 150 workers and seeking to carve out its place in the market by selling high volume at low prices. Women were allowed to shop freely, and advertisements were circulated to draw in new customers. As time passed, the trend toward larger concerns increased, and store owners began to build grand new shopping palaces to please the largely female crowds who flocked to them. In New York City, Macy's added home furnishings, toys, and books to its offerings, and separate departments



The Splendor of Shopping The elegant dome built for the Galeries Lafayette in Paris transformed a department store into a “palace” or even a “cathedral” of commerce.

began to evolve within each store, each with specially trained salesclerks. Textiles, either in the form of bulk cloth or as ready-to-wear clothing, remained, as they do now, the department stores' mainstay, a tribute to the long-lasting appeal of that central product of the Industrial Revolution.

In the department store, the intertwining of the histories of mass production and mass consumption is evident. As factories increased in size and speed of production, the price of goods fell, allowing more consumers to buy more goods. The advent of the department store also led to changes in the labor force. As goods sold in department stores were increasingly mass produced and purchased at cheaper prices from large factories, skilled artisans and small shopkeepers suffered. The stores offered more white-collar jobs to men and women. By 1910, the largest Parisian department store, Le Bon Marché, employed some 3,150 men and 1,350 women. These were desirable jobs for young people fleeing hard times on provincial farms—but they were not easy ones. Female salesclerks were treated very much like domestic servants. They were required to wear plain black clothing so as not to distract the customers from the goods to be sold. As revealed in the well-researched novel *The Ladies' Paradise* (1883), by Émile Zola, salesclerks' low wages often inclined them to take additional jobs, such as sewing, or in desperation, prostitution, to make ends meet.

One of the surviving shopping palaces of the fin de siècle is the Galeries Lafayette in Paris, founded in 1893. The store was built in the wake of Baron Haussmann's rebuilding of Paris (see Chapter 19), near the fashionable opera house and the busy St. Lazare train station. In 1906, the store's owners decided to make a splash by redesigning the interior to remind customers of an oriental bazaar. Artists known for their work in the art nouveau style were hired and designed an elaborate, five-floor, ninety-six-department emporium, complete with escalators and a neo-Byzantine glass dome, thirty-three meters high. This beautiful dome has been restored and can still be enjoyed by tourists and shoppers, who can hope to visit it for many years to come—for the Galeries Lafayette has now been classified as an historic monument. A mostly female staff still serves a mostly female clientele. But working conditions and wages have improved, and the store now belongs to a global franchise. Department stores such as The Galeries Lafayette were products of the second industrial revolution, but they must continue to evolve along with the European economy.

QUESTION | *What does the coming of the department store indicate about the European economy at the fin de siècle?*

tariffs further to protect local industries. Capitalism was flourishing, but the market was anything but free.

The Worker and the Second Industrial Revolution

What was it like to be a worker in this era? Although trade union pressures and reformist legislation called attention to and in some instances curtailed the worst abuses, workers in this era still spent long hours on the job, often in unsafe and unsanitary workplaces. Some places prohibited child labor, but it continued, legally or not, in many industries. Industrial accidents continued to be commonplace, in coal mines and in meatpacking plants. With the opening of the new cafés and department stores, lower-class young women could seek employment in more comfortable surroundings than the textile factories but still suffered abuse.

Statistics suggest that inequalities in income between rich and poor declined between about 1870 and 1914. But many workers did not experience significant changes in their fortunes, or they began to expect more and better sharing of what was, quite obviously, more wealth. Crowded more closely together in big cities and exposed to other people's doings in the mass press, workers could compare their situations more directly with those of others. Political orators and radical newspapermen drew additional attention to injustices. Even children who had to work rolling cigars or ironing clothes began to feel resentful that their contemporaries had been allowed to stay in school, while they joined the workforce. In many places, the working classes became impatient with what seemed an all too static social hierarchy in an era of pervasive change.

The Social Question, Again

In Europe's towns and cities, economic change and the enormous profits being made by some forced the long-simmering social question (see Chapter 18) to the fore. Although real wages were rising, they were not rising fast enough to forestall the hardening of a class system that the poor found almost impossible to escape. Liberal doctrine said that this was not supposed to happen. According to Adam Smith and his successors, the increasing division of labor and the free operation of the market were supposed to allow "all boats to rise." Why was this not happening? Why were many workers still living at essentially subsistence wages, while owners ate roast beef in their private clubs? How long would it be before workers could enjoy the new prosperity? Would political leaders ever take the concerns of the workers to heart, or were they simply puppets of the industrialists? Emboldened to ask such questions, Europeans at the fin de siècle now blamed not only the capitalists, but also liberal political leaders for what seemed all too little progress toward social justice.

The social question had never been an exclusively economic one, but at the fin de siècle, the combination of rising expectations and expanding suffrage ensured that the distribution of Europe's new prosperity would be the great political issue of the day. In this context, new forms of working-class politics took hold across Europe. Some workers joined socialist or communist movements, which promoted the overthrow of capitalism. Others, usually skilled workers with reformist rather than radical goals, joined trade unions, which were the modern descendants of the guilds. In the unions, workers in particular industries banded together to try to pressure management for higher wages and better working conditions. By 1905, unions could claim 3 million members in Britain, 1.5 million in Germany, and 1 million in France—though these figures look much more modest in light of these nations' total populations (about 38 million for Britain, 56 million for Germany, and 38 million for France). Labor unions were instrumental in pressing for better pay, shorter working hours, and safer workplaces, at least for a few skilled workers. Many labor union leaders would make their way into politics and work avidly for further reforms.

The most dramatic way in which workers tried to call attention to their plight was by organizing strikes. There had been peasant revolts and workplace violence in Europe for centuries; England, in particular, had seen large industrial strikes in the 1840s. But by the 1880s, strikes were becoming much more frequent and larger. As both cities and factories grew in size, workers were more concentrated and more easily able to band together to stop work. Most of these stoppages were small and nonviolent, but some were very large. In the London Dock Strike of 1889, for example, some 10,000 protestors and 2,000 policemen gathered in a rally at Trafalgar Square in London on Sunday, November 13. Some strikes, like this one, did turn violent, as police or soldiers tried to disband crowds with horses, truncheons, and sometimes bullets. But workers, urged on by radical orators, increasingly stood their ground and defended their right to strike. When after the Dock Strike rally one ordinary worker died of his wounds, a huge funeral parade was organized to honor him, and perhaps as many as 100,000 people turned out to watch the procession and hear the speeches.

Unlike most work stoppages, the Dock Strike was ultimately successful, in part because supporters of the cause raised money to sustain workers' families during the five-week strike. Poorly paid dock workers ended up receiving slightly increased wages. Despite the eruption of massive strikes across the French coalfields in the 1880s and 1890s, little was done to relieve the poverty of the miners and the terrible conditions under which they labored. Disillusioned organizers realized that unless workers across all industries could be joined together, real progress was unlikely to be made. Frustrated with piecemeal efforts and liberal foot-dragging, many concluded that the older parties and established authorities had to go. It was time for the people to speak.



London Dock Strike On September 7, 1889, the popular British newspaper *The Graphic* devoted its front page to the London Dock Strike. The image on top depicts an orator addressing the workers outside the padlocked entrance to the docks; the lower image shows the workers' relief committee issuing coupons for striking workers to use to buy food.

I The New Politics

In examining changes in the lives of Europeans at the century's end, it is impossible to separate politics from economics; mass production and mass politics were deeply intertwined. Both of these aspects of European modernization brought with them social benefits, but they also created unforeseen conflicts. Speeding up and mechanizing production made some people richer, but destroyed the livelihoods of skilled workers. The expansion of the franchise offered the vote to many more men, but the proliferation of parties often made it impossible for major reformist legislation to pass. The consequences were mixed, and each nation developed its own versions of economic and political modernity. But everywhere, the combination of mass production and mass politics made political liberalism

Why did liberalism fail at the fin de siècle?

economics; mass production and mass politics were deeply intertwined. Both of these aspects of European modernization brought

and its economic counterpart, laissez-faire capitalism, difficult to sustain.

Modern Society's Challenge to Liberalism

Liberalism, the mid-nineteenth-century commitment to the free market, individual reason, and the gradual expansion of political rights, was one of the casualties of the fin de siècle's dynamism. It suffered because it now seemed a far too narrow and exclusionary basis on which to build an industrial society and because the working classes had tired of waiting for their superiors to hand them the better wages and enhanced political influence they believed they deserved. Liberalism failed too because large-scale capitalism, aggressive overseas imperial ventures, and mass political mobilization were incompatible with its values and its experience, most of which lay in operating slower economies and managing smaller and less diverse groups of people. Liberal city managers simply couldn't deal with externalities like building metros or creating municipal sewer systems, or grand-scale threats to public safety, such as the cholera epidemic that struck the city of Hamburg in 1892.

Not all newly enfranchised voters chose radical options; a significant portion of lower- and lower-middle-class voters were horrified by the violence, atheism, pacifism, or property-seizure proposed by the radicals, and joined moderate or right-wing movements instead. But certainly the most striking departure from nineteenth-century liberalism was the advent of a diverse, but determined, socialist movement that insisted that solving the social question was *the* great political issue of the present, and the future.

Socialism and the Second International

By the century's end, radical visions of a society that had transcended capitalism, private property, and elite rule had been in circulation for some decades. Before the 1870s, socialism had been illegal in most of Europe, though officials in different nations treated it differently. Repression was most severe in Russia, where czarist officials regularly sent radicals off to work camps on the northeastern frontier. In 1849, the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky had been treated to a mock execution and then sent to a Siberian prison camp simply for belonging to a circle of intellectuals drawn to the works of utopian socialist Charles Fourier. In western Europe, officials and police locked up agitators who they believed might provoke strikes or urban riots, but they usually did not molest peaceful organizers and writers. One of these (at least theoretically) peaceful organizations was the very small International Working Men's Organization, put together by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in 1864 with the intent of uniting the workers of all nations to fight for revolution. Nationalism, however, killed the

Liberalism's Death in Hamburg

One of the most striking accounts of the crisis of liberalism comes from the pen of historian Richard Evans, whose *Death in Hamburg* (1987) describes the challenges posed to Hamburg's liberal elite by the cholera epidemic of 1892. Evans describes in detail how this important port city had come to be ruled by a relatively small number of commercial businessmen, who fought aggressively to make Hamburg competitive in the new global economy. As was the case in many central European cities, the city fathers of Hamburg were not aristocrats, but they were elected on the basis of a narrow franchise, for only moderately well-off property owners could vote in local elections.

Unlike some more progressive European civic leaders, the Hamburg liberals neglected to undertake general municipal improvements such as building a sewer or adding a filtration system to improve the city's water supply. In the 1890s, most residents still depended on public pumps or took their water from polluted canals, into which people also threw trash, dung, and dead dogs. The port of Hamburg brought much wealth to the city, but the crucial human contributors to the city's commercial success—sailors and dock workers—were housed in terrible slums, around which developed a seedy and dangerous red light district. There were few amenities, such as public baths, or police. Hamburg epitomized a laissez-faire, liberal economy.

The cholera epidemic of 1892 was one of the last to strike the European continent, but it hit Hamburg hard. Doctors were slow to diagnose the disease, as vomiting and diarrhea were by no means uncommon in a citizenry accustomed to bad water and adulterated food. By August 19, some medical authorities had identified the presence of infectious disease in the port area and were calling it cholera.

Rumors began to fly and residents panicked; some 12,000 people left town on August 22–23 alone. But eager not to disrupt trade, the Hamburg authorities waited for six days before warning citizens that the disease was abroad and that their drinking water was unsafe. In the meantime, hot weather allowed the disease to spread through the central water supply. Thousands of people were infected. Between August 26 and September 2, about one thousand new cases of cholera were reported each day, and the disease continued to take a heavy toll all through September. By mid-November, the epidemic was over, but nearly 17,000 Hamburgers had contracted cholera, and 8,600 had died.

The uniqueness of Hamburg's fate was underscored by the fact that no other western European city suffered a major epidemic that year. In the weeks after the dying began, journalists, as well as the social democrats, took out their anger on the liberal authorities, who at first tried to cover up the number of deaths. Anger was increased by the fact that dealing with the epidemic, once it had spread, was costly. Ships, barges, and boats were first quarantined, then had to be inspected and sanitized. There were disinfection squads and hospital workers to pay, and enormous losses as the number of visitors and railway traffic plummeted. In November, the Hamburg Social Democratic Party rallied 30,000 people to attend meetings, at which the liberal elite was denounced as incompetent. By 1896, suffrage had been extended to all Hamburg men, and they had voted the liberals out of office. In the face of a citywide crisis, old-fashioned patrician politics had failed. In Hamburg, liberalism was dead.

QUESTION | *How did the cholera epidemic of 1892 kill liberalism in Hamburg?*

First International at the time of the Franco-Prussian War. Not until the years just before Marx's death in 1883 did his works begin to circulate more widely and to win followers to the cause of revolutionary socialism.

Socialists came from many walks of life. There were intellectuals like the Polish journalist and philosopher Rosa Luxemburg and abused workers like the young Josef Stalin, who had worked in the Caucasus oil fields under police supervision by day and been locked in a barracks for eight hours during the night. Though they took heart from the expansion of trade unionism and the rising number of industrial strikes, socialists did not believe that real progress for the working classes could come without overthrowing capitalism itself. They claimed that only the complete abolition of private property and

the destruction of the bourgeois nation-states would solve the social question. To cure workers' alienation from the products of their labor and from one another, the whole system of divided labor and market exchange had to be overthrown violently. Like Marx, most socialists believed capitalism was already undermining itself and that the revolution was inevitable, sooner or later. But sooner or later was exactly the question that would plague the Second International.

REVOLUTIONARY OR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM?

The recognition that capitalism was a global phenomenon, which could be overthrown only by concerted, international effort, led to the refounding in 1889 of an international consortium of socialist parties, the Second

International Working Men's Organization. Modeled on the organization founded by Marx and Engels in 1864, the much more influential Second International sought to unite the working classes of Europe's many nations in the common pursuit of overthrowing capitalism and launching the era of proletarian rule. But the Second International was split between orthodox Marxists, who insisted that violent revolution was the only answer to the social question, and a position known as **revisionism**. Revisionists, such as the German socialist Eduard Bernstein, insisted that workers did not want revolution, but better wages and working conditions. He urged his colleagues to stand for election and fight for workers' rights *within* the existing system.

At the 1899 socialist party congress in Hanover, Bernstein's position was roundly attacked by orthodox socialists. The controversy led Russian Marxist Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924) to write his famous pamphlet "What Is to Be Done?" in which he argued that leaders like Bernstein were simply playing into the hands of the capitalists and that their reforms would ultimately do nothing to free the workers from their enslavement by the bourgeois class. Recognizing the problem Bernstein had identified—that the masses did not want a grand-scale revolution—Lenin declared that small groups of radical leaders would have to spark revolution, for the workers' own good. Published in 1902, "What Is to Be Done?" helped precipitate the Russian socialist movement's split into the more radical Bolsheviks and the more moderate Menshevik faction. Elsewhere, too, this debate divided the socialist movement into what came to be known as democratic socialists (revisionists) and communists (revolutionary socialists).

ANARCHISM. Even more radical than the revolutionary socialists were the anarchists, who proclaimed that since

governments inevitably fell into the hands of the elite, they needed to be done away with entirely. **Anarchism** was a tiny movement, but it was a highly visible one, as a number of its backers undertook to achieve their ends through terror. The movement attracted followers in southern Italy, southern Spain, and Russia, all places where the state seemed wholly insensitive to the plight of its poorer citizens. Its emergence in Russia came in response to the czarist state's refusal to institute reforms (see Chapter 19). Young men, not surprisingly, formed its shock troops. Between 1881 and 1914, anarchists killed six heads of states, including Czar Alexander II of Russia, King Umberto I of Italy (1900), and King George of Greece (1913). Anarchists were famous for throwing bombs—but as they had no positive solutions to the ever-more pressing social question, they never attracted mass backing but remained a dangerous, fringe element.

Moderate and Conservative Mass Parties

The anarchists and socialists of the Second International may have rejected revisionism, but plenty of other political parties were eager to welcome more moderate voters. Many newly enfranchised voters became strong backers of what was known as municipal socialism, the move to tax more heavily in order to make large investments in metro systems, water supply, electric lighting, and similar projects that would benefit *all* the cities' residents, not just the inhabitants of the wealthier suburbs. This movement would increase city budgets enormously and give much new clout and patronage to city leaders such as the extremely popular mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger, first elected in 1895.

Lueger's party called itself the Christian Socialist Party and gained support from small shopkeepers and service-sector workers as well as from the nonrevolutionary working classes. Lueger was no old-fashioned liberal politician, but a charismatic populist who rallied support by agreeing with the socialists that capitalism needed to be tempered. The way to do this, he argued, was not through revolution, but by taxing businesses and providing services to the little people. Like many other right-wing parties of the day, Lueger's Christian Socialists also played the anti-Semitic card, making the Jews the scapegoats for a supposed decline of morals in urban areas and for the economic hardships faced by lower-class Germans in modern society.

In heavily Catholic areas, **Christian socialism** took off after Pope Leo XIII (r. 1878–1903) issued his 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (*Of New Things*) in 1891. In it, Leo insisted that "some opportune remedy must be found quickly for the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class." His fear was that the capitalism of the late nineteenth century was causing terrible suffering, unceasing conflict between workers and employers, and moral degradation. Even more frightening to the pontiff were the communists'

CHRONOLOGY Socialist Milestones

DATE	EVENT
1848	The <i>Communist Manifesto</i> is published
1864	International Working Men's Organization founded by Marx and Engels (First International)
1878	Bismarck bans Socialist Party in Germany (ban lifted in 1890)
1889	Second International Working Men's Organization founded
1900	British Labor Party founded
1902	Lenin publishes "What Is to Be Done?"
1905	Mass strikes after "Bloody Sunday" in Russia
1912	German Socialists become the largest party in the Reichstag

solutions: the abolition of all private property, the destruction of paternal authority, and the dissolution of the churches. Other means needed to be found to improve the lot of the lower classes before, in despair, they joined the atheistic socialists. The pope did not mean to provoke the founding of multiple Christian socialist parties in Belgium, France, Italy, and Germany as well as Austria, but these movements clearly showed the widespread desire for a nonrevolutionary, popular alternative to old-fashioned liberalism.

Some of the Christian socialist parties held conservative views on moral and religious issues such as the secularization of schools or the rights of women. They often appealed to rural voters, small shopkeepers, and artisans by denouncing the big, mass production industries that threatened their livelihoods. They often boasted of their patriotism, contrasting their national pride to the socialists' commitment to international brotherhood. Christian socialist parties, as well as mass parties emerging farther to the right, also often adopted anti-immigrant or anti-Semitic platforms.

These measures, too, reflected the right-wing parties' attempts to attract newly enfranchised supporters to their ranks. The British Conservative Party reached out beyond its traditional aristocratic base by pursuing a harder line against Irish home rule and against socialism. Britain's colonies became a point of national pride, and building up the navy to keep the Germans down and their own empire pacified constituted a major part of party propaganda. Even conservatism, long the ideology of the aristocracy, was becoming a mass movement.

The Russian Revolution of 1905

Despite all this political ferment, the only major revolution before the First World War occurred in the most illiberal of nations, imperial Russia. It came on quite suddenly and was provoked not by socialists or communists, but by the czarist state's broken promises and humiliating performance in a war against a supposedly less civilized, "oriental" power, Japan.

In December 1904, overworked and angry about the czarist state's performance in the Russo-Japanese War, laborers at the Putilov armaments factory in St. Petersburg went on strike. Soon workers all over the capital city joined them, shutting down electricity and transportation systems. Hoping to undermine revolutionaries' attempts to spread radicalism among the workers, the secret police encouraged a Russian Orthodox priest, Father Gapon, to meet with the workers. Father Gapon listened to the workers' grievances and together they drew up a petition requesting the creation of a democratically elected representative assembly for Russia, the passage of legislation limiting the working day to eight hours, and the setting of a minimum daily wage. On January 22, 1905, a group of some 200,000 men, women, and children assembled before the czar's Winter Palace, hoping their sovereign would recognize their sufferings and accept their petition. Regrettably,

the czar was not home, and the guards panicked. They fired into the crowd, killing or wounding as many as a thousand people. The news spread quickly, unleashing a wave of rioting. Father Gapon denounced the czar and fled abroad; the time for peaceful protests was over.

In the wake of "Bloody Sunday," liberals demanded more civil rights and a representative assembly. Radicals demanded a broader sharing of power and wealth. In St. Petersburg and Moscow, the radicals formed **soviets**, or elected councils within factories, to serve as the basis for a new kind of municipal government. The czar offered only token reforms—one of which, remarkably, was to call an Estates General, just as France's Louis XVI had done in 1789. The soviets declared a general strike, shutting down banks, railroads, newspapers, and businesses. In October, unable to govern, Czar Nicholas II was forced to offer some concessions, including the forming of the first Russian national parliament, the Duma.

But many Russians, especially the radicals, remained deeply unsatisfied. There had been no land reforms, no eight-hour day or minimum-wage legislation. In the provinces, peasant protests continued. Tired of waiting for land reform that never came, peasants burned manor houses and attacked landowners and state officials, causing the rural elite to beg the czar to restore order. Nicholas did his best, using the army, now finally back from the war with Japan, and putting much of rural Russia under martial law. Yet, as late as 1908, nearly two thousand officials were reported killed and another two thousand wounded in rural Russia. If the distribution of shares of power and wealth to all of the nation's producers was agonizingly slow elsewhere in Europe, in the Russian Empire, improvement was almost imperceptible—and its inhabitants were increasingly unwilling to wait.

Civil Strife Intensifies

Russia's 1905 revolution was perhaps the most dramatic moment of civil strife in Europe before 1914, but it was by no means the only one. Paris, as we have seen, experienced a bloodbath in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War. In Spain, during the so-called Tragic Week of Barcelona in July 1909, violence exploded as the masses seized the city, destroying twenty-two churches and thirty-four convents. Military forces suppressed the uprising with brutality, and numerous opponents of the government were executed. Anarchist and extreme nationalist groups planned, and sometimes pulled off, assassinations of political leaders. There were no wars between the great powers, but colonial violence intensified, and a series of smaller regional conflicts, including the Boer Wars, the Russo-Japanese War, and the Balkan Wars, destabilized individual states on the margins.

To complete our picture of rising domestic and international conflict and aggression, we must add a military arms race, and the uncertainty and ambitions generated by the declining power of the two great multinational states on Europe's eastern peripheries, the Ottoman and

1904–1905: *The Russo-Japanese War*

In 1904, few Europeans knew anything at all about Japan. Only a handful realized that it had become an industrial nation, one with modern universities and bureaucracies and a formidable army and navy. Even those who knew these things failed to understand how much the Japanese resented the Russian seizure of the warm-water port of Port Arthur, which they believed was rightfully theirs. Japanese anger surged when the Russians positioned themselves to seize Manchuria and Korea as the Chinese Empire fell into decay. They responded by attacking Port Arthur in February 1904.

The war that followed was a terrible shock to the Russians. The Imperial Japanese Navy bottled up the Russian fleet and began to destroy it. Then the Japanese landed ground troops, which occupied Korea and began to march on Manchuria. The Russians had few soldiers stationed in the Far East and had to bring reinforcements from the western part of their empire, thousands of miles away. As the Trans-Siberian Railway was still incomplete, this process was very slow indeed. Port Arthur on the Pacific coast fell to the Japanese in January 1905, and in February the Japanese army forced Russian soldiers to retreat from the strategically important city of Mukden. The Japanese won the final naval battles, and in May 1905

the Russians, now engulfed in revolution at home, sued for peace.

Japan's victory made not only the Russians, but all Europeans, realize that non-European nations could also modernize and industrialize. Europeans had to confront their belief that Asia was a place where social and economic change could not happen, and explain how it was that a people they described as "oriental" and categorized as decadent or backward were able to win a war against a "white" power. Not everyone agreed on what East Asian modernity would look like, but quite suddenly it seemed that Japan was the place to look for it. Japanese lacquer surged into vogue, and every newspaper wanted a story about Buddhism. Meanwhile, fearful racists in the United States lobbied for discriminatory legislation and the preemptive seizing of Pacific bases. East Asia, wrote the German doctor and ethnographer Erwin Baelz in August 1905, had appeared upon the world stage: "What happens in the Far East will not henceforward have an exclusively local interest, but will necessarily concern us in Europe as well. People here hardly realize the significance of this as yet, but they will learn it as time goes on."⁵

Baelz was quite right, but for reasons he probably did not contemplate. Another audience was observing Japan's victories: anticolonial intellectuals in the nonwestern world. For Indian, Persian, and Indonesian nationalists, Japan's victory suggested that western domination was not eternal and that Europe's own weapons could be turned against it. The first social scientist in Ethiopia encouraged his countrymen to follow Japan's model of modernization, and newborn babies in India were named after Japanese admirals. In 1904, modernity seemed to be the property of Europe and America alone, but one year later, there was another, nonwestern, way forward.

QUESTION | *Why were Europeans so shocked by the outcome of the Russo-Japanese War?*



The Russo-Japanese War This Japanese image celebrates the destruction of the bridge at Pulantien, Manchuria, by Japanese soldiers in 1904.

the Austro-Hungarian Empires. Politically, fin de siècle Europe resembled a pressure cooker. The only questions were where and when the pot would blow.

Racism, Hyper-nationalism, and the Collapse of Old Empires

In various ways, each of Europe's states and multinational empires struggled to deal with impatient new citizens and volatile economic circumstances. To rally newly enfranchised voters, many politicians employed a new, more populist, and more conservative form of patriotism in which race increasingly played a role. The new nationalists defined their states and their interests *against* rather than *together with* other nation-states. They aspired to live in a world in which power was not balanced; rather, they wanted to *win* a continent-wide, or even a global, Darwinian struggle for existence.

In what ways was late-nineteenth-century nationalism different from the nationalism of the pre-1848 era?

enfranchised voters, many politicians employed a new, more populist, and more conservative form of patriotism in which race increasingly played a role. The new nationalists defined their states and their interests *against* rather

than *together with* other nation-states. They aspired to live in a world in which power was not balanced; rather, they wanted to *win* a continent-wide, or even a global, Darwinian struggle for existence. In this era, new political alliances were born with the probability of a great European conflict in sight. At several points along the way, war was only narrowly averted. Many of these war crises involved quarrels over colonial territories among the countries that now called themselves the great powers (Germany, France, Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, and Russia). In 1905, for example, the German kaiser provoked a crisis by pronouncing himself in favor of independence for Morocco, a position selected to vex Britain and France, the colonial powers in the region. There were also bitter rivalries over territory in Europe itself. French propaganda called for revenge for the loss of the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, which the French had forfeited to the Germans after the Franco-Prussian War. All these competitions and animosities led to a massive arms race between the nations, as the British built intimidating warships called dreadnoughts and the Germans trained millions of volunteers to follow the orders of Kaiser Wilhelm II (r. 1888–1918), whatever the cost—to civilians, the state treasury, or their bodies and souls.

In each of these nations, the problems of containing the new mobility and technology and of dealing with diversity and clashing interests recurred. Looking back on the period from later in the twentieth century, it seemed a golden age, one in which world war *was* averted and commerce between nations continued, on the whole, amicably. Yet disturbing processes were under way, and considerable tension and violence existed both within nations and in the colonial theaters. The fin de siècle's combination of new technology, mass mobilization, and intensified economic and imperial competitions set in motion deadly new dynamics, including the hardening of racial categories and enmities, especially the rise of anti-Semitism

throughout Europe as a mass, politicized movement. The same combination of factors also worked its destructive magic on Europe's multinational empires, Russia, Austria-Hungary, and above all, the Ottoman Empire.

The New Anti-Semitism

A religiously founded dislike of Jews was nothing new in Christian Europe in 1880. But what was new after 1880 was the conversion of older campaigns against Jews as religious enemies into attacks on Jews as racial and political enemies, people who simply by virtue of their biological heritage posed a threat to the majority population or the state. Anti-Semitism was one particularly virulent expression of a new sort of racist thinking. Increasingly, Jews were identified not by their practice of a different religion, but for their supposed ethnic characteristics. The infamous "Jewish nose" was made an indicator of one's belonging to the Semitic "race"—and even those practicing Christians with Jewish grandparents, like Sarah Bernhardt, were slandered ceaselessly on account of their Jewish "blood."

The sources of this new anti-Semitism lie not only in racial biology, but also in the economic instability of the fin de siècle, and European reaction to the westward migration of hundreds of thousands of eastern or Ashkenazi Jews, seeking to escape Russian pogroms (Map 21.2). Unlike western European Jews, many of whom had assimilated into local cultures, these eastern Jews often adhered to orthodox practices, wore the traditional long caftan or curled sideburns, and spoke Yiddish or Russian rather than German or Czech. Most were quite poor and tended to live together in dilapidated cheap housing in big cities. Their unusual appearance, traditional practices, and poverty made these Jews, in particular, the targets of claims that they were taking all the jobs, planning secret conspiracies against Christians, or even seeking to undermine the health and prosperity of the host population.

Jews had long been associated with exploitative capitalism, rationalism, and internationalism, and this made them especially vulnerable in an era in which liberalism was under siege and new forms of virulent nationalism were taking hold. The 1890s and 1900s also saw an upsurge in archaic forms of anti-Semitism, as a number of Jews were accused of ritually murdering Christian children and drinking their blood. Pogroms continued, especially in western Russia. Villages were burned and their inhabitants terrorized, but modern mechanisms were now used to further the cause. Mass political parties, such as the Polish National Democrats, used anti-Semitism to rally support from those who were seeking scapegoats for the economy's failings. Mass-circulated newspapers, such as Édouard Drumont's *La Libre Parole* (*The Free Word*), founded in 1892, devoted themselves to denouncing Jews. Publishers eagerly printed, in inexpensive editions, horrible anti-Semitic tracts, such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The *Protocols*, which pretended to be the

secret plans of the Jews to take over the world, was a crude forgery created by Russian anti-Semites about 1905, but it would become the foundation for long-lasting suspicion and hatred of the Jews throughout the western world.

THE DREYFUS AFFAIR.

Anti-Semitism was particularly widespread and violent in central and eastern Europe, where most of Europe's Jews resided. But other countries were not immune. Indeed, the most widely publicized and politically important case of Jewish persecution occurred in liberal France. There, the widest ranging public debate about the possibility for full assimilation of the Jews occurred. In the wake of the debate, one particularly important Jewish leader, Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), despaired of the future of the Jews in Europe and founded yet another mass movement: Zionism.

The debate in France was provoked by a treason trial. In 1894, Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935), a Jewish captain in the French military and an Alsatian Jew, was accused by conservative officers of selling secrets to Germany. Dreyfus was convicted on scanty evidence, court-martialed, and sent to prison for life. Drumont's newspaper *La Libre Parole* was exultant, as were many royalists and right-wing members of the Catholic Church and the army—groups who generally disliked Jews and felt threatened by the growing number of radicals in the government. Their opponents, French left-liberals and left-wing intellectuals such as Émile Zola and Sarah Bernhardt, were impressed by Dreyfus's insistence on his innocence and pushed for a new investigation. In 1896, the chief of counterintelligence uncovered evidence pointing to the guilt of a deeply indebted aristocrat and showed that the documents used to convict Dreyfus were forgeries. The aristocrat was tried, but now that the honor of the military and judiciary was at stake, the two groups rallied forces and acquitted him, and it was the chief of counterintelligence who went to jail.

This series of events provoked a blizzard of denunciations from the liberal press, the most famous of which was



MAP 21.2 | Jewish Emigration, 1870–1914

This map shows the Pale of Settlement and other areas with a large Jewish population before 1914. Arrows indicate the direction of emigration from these areas, especially after the Russians unleashed a series of pogroms starting in 1881—though most Jews did not leave their home countries. The greater numbers and common language (Yiddish) as well as religious practices of the Jews of the Pale meant that community-building here had been much more extensive, and assimilation less prevalent than was the case among Jews in western European countries. Eastern Jews also tended to be poorer than western Jews, and to retain their older styles of dress. **Imagine the eastern Jews' reaction to a place like modern Paris or Vienna—how might they have felt in these new settings? How might urban Parisians or Viennese citizens have reacted to them?**

Zola's attack on the establishment, "*J'accuse*" ("I accuse"), published January 13, 1898, in Georges Clemenceau's newspaper *L'Aurore*. The edition sold its entire print-run of 300,000 copies in a matter of hours, and French readers were treated to a rhetorical tour de force in which Zola accused leading military and judicial officials of forgery, lying, and perverting the course of justice. It was a frontal assault on France's right-wing establishment, and it landed Zola in prison for libel.

The republicans rallied, and in the May 1898 elections, voters swept a radical majority into parliament, and a new official inquiry showed more documents to be forgeries. Right-wing anti-Dreyfusards denounced the Jews for trying to destroy the Republic. In response, the left organized rallies on Dreyfus's behalf. Newspapers around the world broadcast details of the "Affair." Prayers were said for Dreyfus in Jerusalem, and one rally in London's Hyde Park drew 50,000 demonstrators. After 1900, the Affair faded from public consciousness, driven off the front pages by



Anti-Semitism in the French Press This cover of Édouard Drumont's book *Jewish France* (1886) depicts a Christian crusader striking down "Jewish France," caricatured as a modern Moses who wears a German-style helmet and carries a bag of gold coins.

the Boer Wars, the Boxer Rebellion, and the Russo-Japanese War. Dreyfus's full acquittal in 1906 came as something of a quiet denouement. But the Dreyfus Affair exposed the fault lines not only in France but throughout Europe, and many assimilated Jews realized just how many of their fellow citizens still hated and feared them.

THE ORIGINS OF ZIONISM. Galvanized into action by this realization was Theodor Herzl, an Austrian Jew born in Budapest. Sent to Paris as a journalist to cover the Affair, Herzl was shocked by the level of animosity expressed by the anti-Dreyfusards and discouraged by the lack of concern expressed by the liberals. Without their own nation-state to push for their rights, Herzl concluded, Jews were destined to be persecuted forever. In 1896, Herzl published *The Jewish State*, a pamphlet in which he argued that the Jews would not be safe unless and until they obtained a nation-state of their own. Herzl was not a religiously active Jew, and at the time of this pamphlet, he thought the new state might be set up in present-day Kenya or Cyprus. But a small movement of

more religiously oriented Jews was already under way and called on Jews to return to Palestine. Soon Herzl was convinced that **Zionism**, the return to the biblical Zion, was the only viable option. Though his efforts to convince the Ottoman sultan to give Palestine to the Jews were in vain, Russian Jews, in particular, began to settle there. Between 1904 and 1914, some 40,000 mostly eastern Jews settled in Palestine. This number, however, amounted to only a fraction of the Jews who left eastern Europe before the First World War—far more went to the Americas, and in 1914, Jews constituted only about 8 percent of the population of Palestine. Although Zionism was invented at the fin de siècle, it would take many more decades for Herzl's successors to realize his vision.

The New Ways of War

Although there were no major conflicts among the great powers between 1871 and 1914, there were numerous war scares, and many discussions, in newspapers as well as in secret meetings, about the big European conflict that virtually everyone believed would eventually break out. Competition over power on the continent and over colonies abroad led the powers to worry more and more about the size of their land armies and the sophistication of their navies. Improvements in steel manufacturing and in ballistics made possible the mass production of armaments, and technological innovations increased their firepower and accuracy. From the 1890s on, Europe was engaged in a fierce arms race. The French were first to develop a quick-firing 75-millimeter artillery piece that remained stationary after firing, which meant that the gun did not need to be aimed before firing again. Developed in 1896, France's new gun could also deliver shells accurately from a distance of seven kilometers (putting the guns beyond the enemy's sight), and fire up to twenty rounds a minute, four times the old rate of delivery. Others immediately tried to imitate the technology, and by 1905 all the great powers were investing considerable time, energy, and money in producing their own quick-firing artillery.

Enormous sums, indeed, were spent readying Europe for wars—both the colonial wars they continued to fight and the grand-scale continental war that planners predicted. Military budgets expanded, particularly after the century's turn, as tensions over the Balkans mounted. Nearly doubling their expenditures between 1904 and 1913, the Russians, on the war's eve, were spending about \$330 million on their army—a huge sum for a nation in which impoverished peasants still formed a large majority. Germany, the fastest growing power of the period and the one with the grandest aspirations, was spending \$394 million, up from a mere \$154 million in 1904. By this time, the Russians could boast of a standing army of 1.3 million; the German army reached 782,000 men.⁶ Under Kaiser Wilhelm II, a ruler eager to assert his nation's right to establish a great colonial empire (despite having started after almost all of Asia and Africa had

been carved up), the Germans also engaged in a naval arms race with the British. The two sought to build larger and larger steel battleships, though the Germans never came close to rivaling Britain's dominance at sea. Though socialists in both countries complained about the enormous expenditures, and worried about the prospect of European workers being thrown into battle against one another—rather than against their common capitalist enemies—the build-up only intensified as time went on. No nation felt it could rest. Falling behind the others might well mean national defeat and disaster.

But, in yet another way, the fin de siècle also showed itself to be an era of contradictions. Though nations were planning for bigger conflicts, in a series of international agreements signed between 1864 and 1914, they also pledged themselves to the conduct of more civilized wars. In 1864, the Geneva Convention promised the humane treatment of prisoners. The Hague Convention on Land Warfare (1899) further committed signers of the document to refrain from using weapons such as poison gas and dum-dum bullets that might injure civilian bystanders and from forcing civilians to serve as spies, hostages, or guides. Collective retribution against civilians was also forbidden. Although atrocities continued to be committed in the course of colonial warfare, a considerable number of Europeans publicly decried the cruel treatment of South Africans during the Boer Wars and the near genocide of the Herero people of German Southwest Africa. Again, grand aspirations—the “civilizing” of warfare—existed side by side with spiraling fears, in this case, fears of national annihilation.

The New Nationalism and the Old Empires

In the building of mass armies and the rising fears of national annihilation, we begin to see the emergence of a new kind of nationalism, one that is no longer of the liberal, reformist sort. Whereas liberal nationalists opposed the feudal economies and social privileges of the old regimes and at least in theory believed that all nations could live in harmony with one another, the new nationalists tended to be adversarial, contrasting their nation's needs and ambitions with those of others and rallying their people against foreigners or newcomers. Increasingly, one's membership in the nation was established not by residency or religion, but by one's first language or ethnicity, and national identity was reinforced by public school lessons, national holidays, and the popular press.

The new nationalists were well aware that Europe's map, especially in the east, was malleable, especially as nationality disputes and slow economic growth crippled the Ottoman and Austrian Empires. Rather than wanting to unite territories, as did the Italian and German nationalists of the 1850s and 1860s, the nationalists of the 1880s and 1890s wanted to break up old states in order to get their own. These activists—whose ranks included Czechs, Ukrainians, Serbs, and Poles in Austria-Hungary;

Arabs, Persians, and Greeks in the Ottoman Empire; and the Irish in the British Isles—resemble in many ways the anticolonial activists at work in the British, French, Dutch, and German Empires. Like their colleagues abroad, they had tired of waiting for the regimes above them to share power and were impatient for the opportunity to define their own modern destinies.

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY'S LAST DAYS. The Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian wars had a powerful effect on the territories known as the German Confederation. Bismarck's efforts had yielded a unified German Empire, but they had also allowed Hungarians in the Habsburg lands to achieve virtual self-rule within the newly christened Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867). Ceding so much autonomy to the Hungarians was important because it set up a whole series of other challenges to German-Habsburg overlordship. Austria-Hungary, populated by many different ethnic and religious groups, including Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, Poles, Ukrainians, Ruthenes, Jews, Croats, Serbs, and Italians, would find it difficult to contain the centripetal forces of nationalism as the century wore on (Map 21.3).

Emperor Franz Josef (r. 1848–1916) had signed a relatively liberal constitution in 1867 and did try to abide by it. Hoping to keep the empire together, he tried to balance the power of the different ethnic groups, though the Germans retained the upper hand. For example, Franz Josef made concessions to Czech nationalists, including the stipulation that public schools in heavily Czech areas such as Bohemia should offer instruction in Czech as well as German. Other groups, such as the Poles, Croatians, and Ukrainians, made similar demands, and in many areas, including the armed forces, the empire did function as a multilingual state. But Czech, Polish, Ukrainian, and Southern Slav resentment toward the German population was not only linguistic, but also socioeconomic. Whereas by 1904 only a third of German Austrians were employed in agriculture, half the Czechs, two-thirds of Poles, and over 90 percent of the Slavic-speaking Ruthenes still lived essentially peasant lifestyles. Germans dominated factory and handicraft industries and trade, as well as the civil service and white-collar jobs.

By the end of the nineteenth century, nationalists in all these regions had begun vigorous, and sometimes violent, campaigns to create their own autonomous states. There were fistfights between German and Czech delegates in the Austrian parliament. The Polish nationalist movement took a sharp turn away from liberal nationalism, adopting violence and hatred as weapons in their struggle for independence. As a leader of this movement wrote in 1902: “Patriotism based on love for one's own nation . . . is a patriotism good for that unrealized golden age when all social and national antagonisms will disappear. But such patriotism is ever more foreign to our civilized world. . . . Today's patriotism is associated with national antagonism.”⁷⁷ At the same time, Slavic nationalists and their advocates in the Russian Empire began to

insist on the commonalities all Slavs shared and to seek pan-Slavic alliances across national boundaries. They were answered, inevitably, by the formation of a Pan-German League, dedicated to promoting the interests of ethnic Germans, whether they resided in Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, or any other state. Nobody wanted to be a minority ethnic group anymore—nor, ominously, did the new nationalists plan to incorporate minorities into the future states they were dreaming up. The era of the multinational empire was coming to its end.

Pan-German and pan-Slavic movements were the most consequential for the Austrians and for Europe as a whole, but other pan-movements began in this era as well. One might call Zionism a pan-movement for Jews; a pan-African movement had begun to rally Africans of all nationalities to unite. A pan-Asian movement was also beginning to take shape. The Ottoman sultan was a major supporter of an embryonic pan-Islamic movement—just as the Russian czar encouraged pan-Slavism. None of these movements were particularly well organized, and most historians do not think they were particularly influential—with the exception of pan-Germanism, which appealed powerfully to some young hotheads, such as Adolf Hitler. But what these movements suggest is that groups were beginning to think of themselves in grand racial terms, beyond the boundaries of the nations, and to look forward to a day when the old hierarchical and heterogeneous empires would crumble, and new, purer and more populist, ones would appear.

OTTOMAN APOCALYPSE. In southeastern Europe, new nationalist programs even more successfully ate away at the territory and power of a failing multinational empire, that of the Ottoman Turks. After the Russo-Turkish War, the Serbs, like the Bulgarians and Romanians, had obtained full independence from the Ottoman Empire. In 1882, Serbia replaced its princes with a monarch, Peter I. But the Kingdom of Serbia thought its borders too small. The Serbs lacked an outlet to the sea and many Serbs had been stranded in Bosnia, where they chafed under Austro-Hungarian rule. They saw the receding power of the Ottomans as an opportunity for



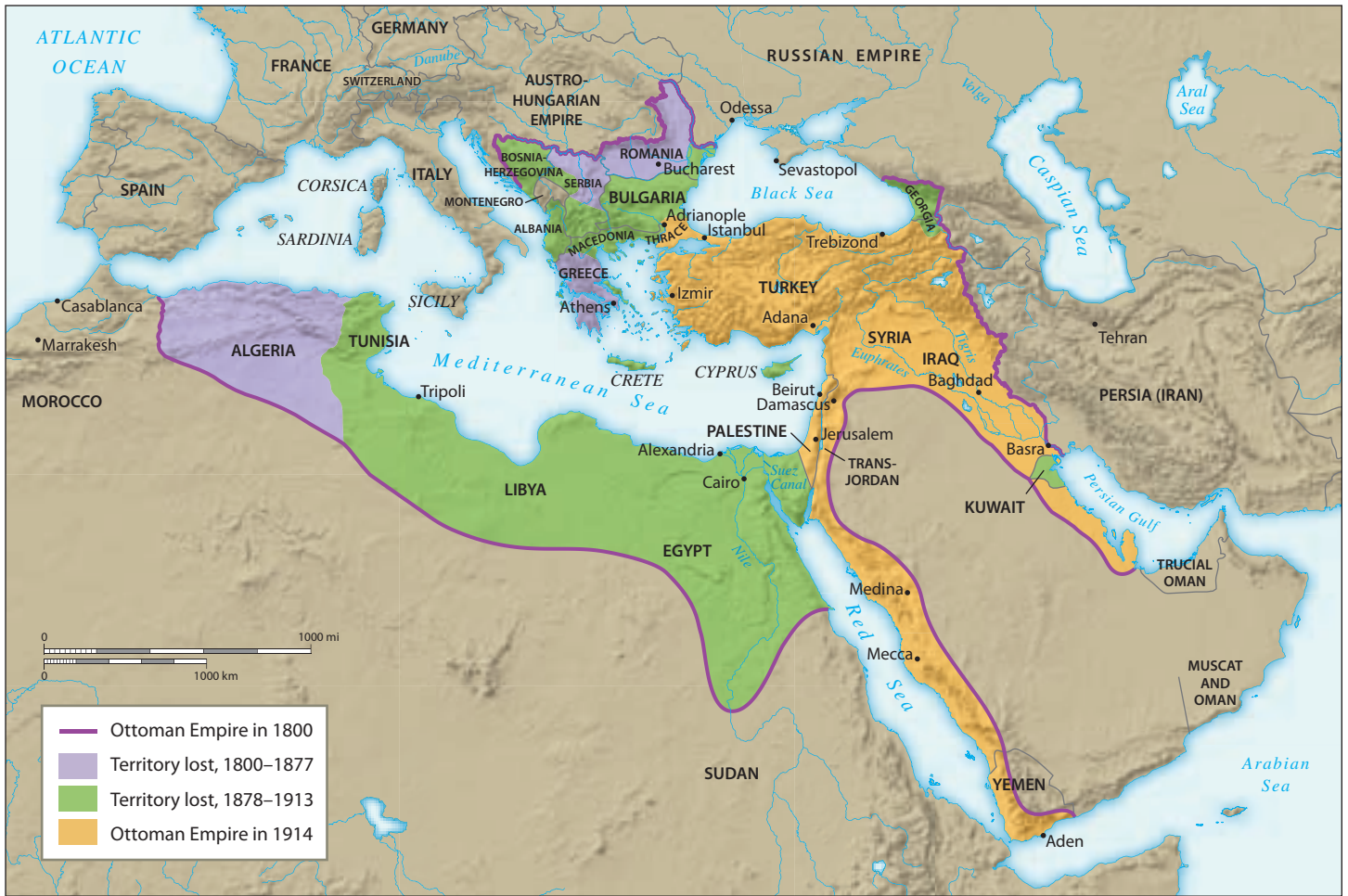
MAP 21.3 | Language Groups of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, c. 1914

A variety of language groups resided in the Austro-Hungarian Empire on the eve of the First World War. **Could the Austro-Hungarian Empire have been divided neatly into single-language nation-states? Which nationality groups were able to seek support from states on the borders of the empire?**

expansion (Map 21.4). The French and British regarded the Eastern Question as one in which they were entitled to meddle, for they did not want to see an Ottoman collapse result in Russian gains, or in Ottoman failure to pay back loans (see Chapter 19). Joined by the Russians, Austrians, and Germans, they also took advantage of the Ottoman Empire's weakness to send missionaries and men of commerce to the eastern Mediterranean, hoping to establish spheres of influence even in areas where they did not carve out colonial states, such as Egypt (under British control) or Tunisia (under French dominance).

Alarmed and angered by these events, some Ottoman Turks turned their resentment on the Christian minorities in their midst and began to see Greeks and Armenians as traitors, who would use Christian, European support to further erode the power and prestige of the traditional Turkish ruling class. In 1895, after a group of Armenians marched in Istanbul in favor of reforms, the city's residents turned on a population they believed should remain subordinate. In this incident and in several subsequent massacres, between 100,000 and 300,000 Armenians died. Another massacre occurred in 1909, in Adana in central Anatolia.

By this time, the Turks had developed a nationalist movement of their own. Turkish nationalism was born partly as a defense of Ottoman power and partly as a critique of the corrupt, indebted, and insufficiently



MAP 21.4 | Ottoman Territorial Losses, 1800–1914

This map illustrates the territorial losses experienced by the Ottoman Empire over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Were critics of the empire correct in describing the Ottoman Empire as “the sick man of Europe”? Why or why not?

modernized sultanate. Most supporters of Turkish nationalism were not religiously motivated Muslims, but men who looked to secular, western states as models of proper development. Many of the leaders of the movement were army officers, who were eager to start winning, rather than losing, wars.

In 1908, the so-called Young Turks overthrew the sultan’s government. Although the sultan was allowed to retain his title, running the state was entrusted to a secularizing, ethnically Turkish military elite. The Young Turks had little time to modernize before a series of new wars broke out. In 1911, the Italians seized the Ottoman provinces in northern Africa that now make up Libya, as well as the island of Rhodes. Then, in the first Balkan War (1912–1913), the Serbs, Bulgarians, and Greeks banded together to form the Balkan League and attacked the Turks.



The Balkan Wars The Balkan Wars proved to be the largest military engagements in Europe since the Franco-Prussian War. Here, two Turkish soldiers retreat after the Bulgarian victory over Ottoman forces in the Battle of Lüleburgaz in October–November 1912.

The Balkan League triumphed, but the victors fell out over who was to have the choice spoils of Albania and Macedonia. In 1913, the Bulgarians went to war with the Greeks and Serbs. In this second Balkan War, the Ottomans came in on the winning Serbo-Greek side and managed to reclaim the city of Adrianople (now Edirne) as well as part of Thrace.

The ethnic conflicts in the southeast and the Balkan Wars were in some ways continuous with previous developments. Just as French partisans had conducted a form of guerrilla warfare against the Prussian army in France in 1870–1871, so too in the Balkans did civilians and irregular militias operate outside the bounds of regular

military conduct. There were harsh reprisals against civilians, and large sectors of the minority population were terrorized and compelled to leave their homes. The treatment of Muslims by the Greeks and Bulgarians, and even more powerfully the Italian attack on northern Africa, rallied Muslims to the cause of the Ottoman Empire, even as that empire was fragmenting. Radical nationalists, like the young Bosnian Serb Gavrilo Princip, volunteered to give their lives to help throw off the Austrian overlords. Elsewhere, radical German, French, and Italian nationalists were also calling for the expulsion of foreigners and the enlargement of their own states.

Conclusion

The roughly three decades that form the *fin de siècle* were years of extremely rapid change in Europe. Those changes—economic, political, and cultural—produced an enormously dynamic and diverse society, but also provoked heightened anxieties. New groups—workers, women, and minority ethnic groups—found it possible to participate in political and cultural life, although the wealthy and in some places the old nobility still held considerable power. Both political and economic liberalism came under fire as the masses tired of waiting for

reform or for autonomous statehood. Some sought solutions in socialism—or in racist hyper-nationalism. There were, of course, moderate voices, those who tried to use diplomacy, reform, and reason to temper rising passions. But as the *fin de siècle* faded, these voices were hard to hear over the din of clanging machines, competing charismatic leaders, and sensation-seeking journalists. It was an exhilarating and terrifying age of tensions and transformations—but it would seem tame and placid for those Europeans who lived to see July 28, 1914, dawn.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. Why did the social question seem even more urgent than ever at the *fin de siècle*?
2. Why was liberalism losing its appeal in this era? What parties or causes were attracting new support?
3. What made so many people feel that they had suddenly been thrust into a modern age?

Key Terms

fin de siècle (p. 667)	art nouveau (p. 675)	second industrial revolution (p. 680)	Christian socialism (p. 685)
suffragette (p. 673)	symbolism (p. 675)	revisionism (socialist) (p. 685)	soviets (p. 686)
avant-garde (p. 674)	anomie (p. 678)	anarchism (p. 685)	pogrom (p. 688)
modernism (p. 675)	cartel (p. 679)		Zionism (p. 690)

Primary Sources in connect®

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1. Modern Pilgrims Flock to Visit Holy Relics
2. Vladimir Lenin Advocates the Formation of a Revolutionary Elite
3. On Village Hygiene (1902)
4. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*
5. Émile Zola Accuses the French Government of Framing Alfred Dreyfus
6. Eduard Bernstein Endorses Democratic Socialism

Gustave Le Bon, The Crowd

Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931) was a French liberal and a pioneer in the study of sociology and crowd psychology. His widely read study, *The Crowd*, appeared in 1896 and was read by Sigmund Freud, who found in it inspiration for examining the power of the unconscious. The book was also read by Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler, and Vladimir Lenin, men who would become the sort of leaders that Le Bon believed characteristic of the turn of the twentieth century. Le Bon, who also believed that racial characteristics determined national destinies, emphasizes the power of crowds to destroy liberal virtues such as individual rationality, willpower, and self-control. His leading example of the evils that attend the entry of the masses into politics is the era of Robespierre, the radical phase of the French Revolution.

Introduction: The Era of Crowds

Scarcely a century ago the traditional policy of European states and the rivalries of sovereigns were the principal factors that shaped events. The opinion of the masses scarcely counted, and most frequently indeed did not count at all. Today it is the traditions which used to obtain in politics, and the individual tendencies and rivalries of rulers which do not count; while, on the contrary, the voice of the masses has become preponderant. It is this voice that dictates their conduct to kings. . . . The destinies of nations are elaborated at present in the heart of the masses, and no longer in the councils of princes. . . .

Chapter 1: The General Characteristics of Crowds

Different causes determine the appearance of these characteristics peculiar to crowds, and not possessed by isolated individuals. The first is that the individual forming part of a crowd acquires, solely from numerical considerations, a sentiment of invincible power which allows him to yield to instincts which, had he been alone, he would perforce have kept under restraint. He will be the less disposed to check himself from the consideration that, a crowd being anonymous, and in consequence irresponsible, the sentiment of responsibility which always controls individuals disappears entirely. . . .

We see, then, that the disappearance of the conscious personality, the predominance of the unconscious personality, the turning by means of suggestion and contagion of feelings and ideas in an identical direction, the tendency to immediately transform the suggested ideas into acts; these, we see, are the principal characteristics of the individual forming part of a crowd. He is no longer himself, but has become an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will.

Moreover, by the mere fact that he forms part of an organized crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilization. Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a

barbarian—that is, a creature acting by instinct. He possesses the spontaneity, the violence, the ferocity, and also the enthusiasm and heroism of primitive beings, whom he further tends to resemble by the facility with which he allows himself to be impressed by words and images . . . and to be induced to commit acts contrary to his most obvious interests and his best-known habits. An individual in a crowd is a grain of sand amid other grains of sand, which the wind stirs up at will.

Chapter 3: The Leaders of Crowds and their Means of Persuasion

A crowd is a servile flock that is incapable of ever doing without a master. The leader has most often started as one of the led. He has himself been hypnotized by the idea, whose apostle he has since become. It has taken possession of him to such a degree that everything outside it vanishes, and that every contrary opinion appears to him an error or a superstition. An example in point is Robespierre, hypnotized by the philosophical ideas of Rousseau, and employing the methods of the Inquisition to propagate them.

The leaders we speak of are more frequently men of action than thinkers. They are not gifted with keen foresight, nor could they be, as this quality generally conduces to doubt and inactivity. They are especially recruited from the ranks of those morbidly nervous, excitable, half-deranged persons who are bordering on madness. However absurd may be the idea they uphold or the goal they pursue, their convictions are so strong that all reasoning is lost upon them. Contempt and persecution do not affect them, or only serve to excite them the more. They sacrifice their personal interest, their family—everything. . . . The multitude is always ready to listen to the strong-willed man, who knows how to impose himself upon it. Men gathered in crowds lose all force of will, and turn instinctively to the person who possesses the quality they lack.

QUESTIONS | *How does Le Bon's work exemplify liberal fears about the coming of the age of mass politics? Would Le Bon's analysis describe the experience of the masses everywhere in Europe at the century's end? To which nations would it be most and least applicable?*

Source: Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta, Ga.: Cherokee Publishing, 1982), xv, 12–13, 113–114.